This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

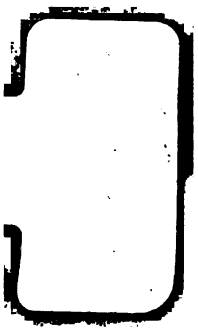
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



BY

ARTHUR C. BENSON

FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

THE UPTON LETTERS

FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW

BESIDE STILL WATERS

THE ALTAR FIRE

THE SCHOOLMASTER

AT LARGE

THE SILENT ISLE

JOHN RUSKIN

LEAVES OF THE TREE

CHILD OF THE DAWN

PAUL THE MINSTREL

THY ROD AND THY STAFF

THY ROD AND THY STAFF

By

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

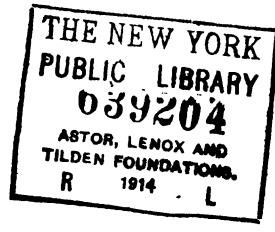
Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

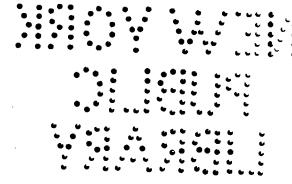
NEW YORK AND LONDON

The Knickerbocker Press

1912



COPYRIGHT, 1912
BY
ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON



The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

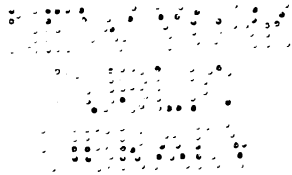
HENRY ROSS TODD

This Book

IS BY HIS FRIEND THE AUTHOR

AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY

Dedicated



NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

PREFACE

I WROTE in the last of my books that dealt with personal experience, *The Silent Isle*, that I would some day tell, if I could, how it was that my pleasant design failed. I only wish I knew why it failed!

Well, this present book contains my sad and strange adventure, sad at first, and always strange, but afterwards so wonderfully blest in all its gifts and issues—the sense of life renewed, of old comfortable hopes and purposes destroyed, the glad prospects of the soul, the nearness and dearness of human relationship—that the failure has become for me not indeed a triumph, but a joy, in the hunted escape I made from a foolish and complacent

Paradise into the real world—or so at least I think!

In any case it is all here humbly and plainly stated—the disappointment, the misery, the stumbling in the lonely mist—and then suddenly the beautiful outlook, as upon mountain-heads and falling streams and homelike valleys, that flashed upon my wondering eyes. Of course the danger of such a book is that it may all come to seem too dramatic, too heroic—a grouping of effects and contrasts around a central figure; but I can only say, quite frankly and simply, that anything less heroic and less dramatic than my handling of the adventure, cannot well be conceived. If I were in search of credit, I might well wish to suppress the ghastly inefficiency, the comatose listlessness, the shuddering cowardice with which I trod the dreary path. A noble nature, by hopeful endurance and

tender considerateness, might have made something splendid out of the miserable episode. But I conducted myself like the abject figure in the *Winter's Tale* of the gentleman pursued by the bear; it was a dolorous and undignified flight, full of miserable indecision and helpless prostration. I showed no fight at all; I simply shuffled despairingly away from the monster which pursued me, murmuring apologies, and pleading for mercy.

It was that which made the end of it all so comforting and reviving—though in a sense so humiliating—that I had not earned my reward, except by bearing the blows of fate as a bolster might bear them, limply bulging back to my former shape. I do not wish there to be any mistake about this; for shocking as the experience was, I was very tenderly used, never tried beyond my strength, never absolutely at the

end of my resources, helped patiently over many a stile. That was the one hopeful thing about it all. I was intended to suffer, and I did suffer; but I was not overwhelmed by suffering, and day by day I grew to feel that my miseries were being very delicately adjusted and apportioned to the exact end in view. My brain was never numbed, and I was always aware exactly what was happening to me. And thus I had the blessed sense that, though I was punished, I was also forgiven. It was remedial and not retributive.

I do not suppose that those who saw me constantly in my trouble could have had any idea that it was so with me; the compassion and the affection shown me made me aware of how unjust my chastisement appeared, falling on a decorous and well-intentioned person, whose fault was to have done too much rather than too little.

And this gives me the hope, and more than the hope, that if one could see into the minds of the afflicted and the despairing, one would know that though they may repine they do not rebel; and that if indeed they seem to rebel, it is just that very stubbornness of will which has to be broken down; because the end of it all is this, that God can do nothing with us unless we yield ourselves up to Him, and that if we cannot do that willingly and spontaneously, we must learn how utterly dependent on Him we are, that it is He that has made us and not we ourselves; for thus and thus only can we be in union with Him, by realising first our own infirmity, and next, that strength and happiness lie only in being inside His Will. That is the transference which we all have to make, and suffering matters little if we learn to make it; but we cannot dictate our own

terms in the matter, or arrange an impressive capitulation; we must just crawl home like the prodigal son, counting so little upon a welcome, that the music and the feasting must come to us as an unutterable and incredible surprise, and be the last sign of our true humiliation.

THE OLD LODGE,
MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
September 20, 1912.

THY ROD AND THY STAFF

Thy Rod and Thy Staff

I

In the winter of 1909 I recovered from an illness which had lasted over two years. I have had very little ill-health in my life, and possibly I am not in a position to judge, but as far as my experience goes, it is the most dreadful and afflicting illness which it is possible to have, both for the sufferer and for all about him. Neurasthenia, hypochondria, melancholia—hideous names for hideous things—it was these, or one of these. The symptoms a persistent sleeplessness, a perpetual dejection, amounting at times to an intolerable mental anguish. The mind perfectly unclouded and absolutely hopeless. I tried rest-cures,

medicines, treatment of all kinds, waters, hypnotism.

There was a month of travel, during which the lights of life seemed to be going out one by one. I was at Rome, and there were hours when the cloud lifted suddenly in that golden-brown, deep-streeted, strong-savoured city, musical with waters. I remember an afternoon of wonderful peace in the sunshine on the top of the mounded hill-fort of Tusculum, with the cyclamens in leaf in the chestnut copse, and a strange fantastic city thrust out like a horn before us in among the blue hills; a day when we walked far out among the tombs on the Appian Way, and a hope of peace came quietly to me in the long-shadowed afternoon, as the twilight rolled in purple vapours over the wide plain; but it was all merged in a dreadful weariness, a drying-up of the springs of life.

Then it was Florence, that silver-white and shapely town. I toiled faithfully about to see beautiful things, till the whole became unutterably hideous to me, and I sickened for home; then came an attempt to return to work, and another collapse; and then came the worst experience of all, when I went for some careful treatment to a nursing home in the suburbs of London. It was a fine house, luxuriously furnished, and I received the most extraordinary kindness from the good rugged doctor who presided, who, however tired he was, came to sit with me in the evening, day after day, to try and interest me with kindly talk, and from his motherly wife who thought of twenty things that might amuse me. I used to wake, morning by morning, in my pleasant room, and hear the drowsy twittering of birds in the great plane-tree, the upper boughs of which were on a level

with my window, and wonder half-bewildered where I was; till the old horror rushed back into the mind, the dread of I knew not what, the anguish of life thus strangely interrupted, perhaps never to be resumed. The windows of my room looked out over the back gardens of two rows of tall houses; nearly opposite was a room in a big house, which had no curtains or blind; and at certain hours a human being, whose head seemed wholly bald and strangely coloured, and who had no features that I could discern, used to sit by the window and manipulate some strange machine, in which things like dolls swung quickly to and fro on wires. This strange sight used to draw me with a morbid horror to gaze upon it hour by hour; what shadowed life did it represent? I think that the worst hour of my whole illness came to me there, on a sunny morning full of

life and light, when I walked on the high Common with all its wide rolling views, and with the smoke of the city going up, and sate down on a bench among the dingles, feeling myself deserted by God and man, condemned to suffer a pain of which each minute seemed an eternity, in which dread, disgust, repugnance, and dreariness seemed all entwined in one sickening draught. In the afternoons I used to go down to my club, friends used to meet me, walk with me, entertain me. I often dined out quietly, and in the evenings my faculties seemed to be dulled into acquiescence; but there was always the thought of the next day's waking ahead of me; and at last that was over, and I went back to my home, to dawdle and loiter through the days, just capable of attending to necessary correspondence, and able by an effort to meet people, to talk, to join feebly and

irritably in life. All the time I was ceaselessly advised to travel and to move about; and I visited many beautiful places in England, with some faithful friend or other, all utterly and indistinguishably sad and mournful to me. I am not sure that this is the best policy to pursue, though perhaps it saves the sick mind from the worst sort of brooding, though at what a cost! I am not sure that nature is not trying by listless weariness to compel the overstrained and jaded brain to entire inaction. But there lies the mystery of this strange affliction—that no one knows what to do for one, or how to help. Even the wisest and kindliest doctor can but listen as it were at the door of the torture-chamber, and hear the groans of the racked spirit within.

After six months of these miseries I went back to my work—it would have been per-

haps better if I had never left it—and struggled on, just able to get through my daily engagements, but without the slightest interest in anything. My friends did their best for me, entertained me, travelled with me; I received incredible kindness from many doctors, and from one in particular, whose name stands at the head of these pages, whose brotherly kindness never failed or faltered. They could really do little for me except reassure me that there was nothing organically wrong. The illness is not, I think, dangerous to life, except in so far as the perpetual desire for rest on any terms, even on terms of death itself, must almost inevitably make the sufferer dwell upon the thought of self-destruction; but my natural vitality, or my imagination, or perhaps my cowardice, saved me to a great extent from ever entertaining this purpose. I think it is a

disease which affects the emotional centres of the brain, not the intellectual; and my own advice to any sufferer would be, if possible, to avoid any sort of excitement or distraction, and just try to live the quietest kind of regular and familiar life, passing the time as easily as possible.

But I have no intention of writing about my illness. I did at one time propose to myself to do so, when I found my health returning. But it is better, I am sure, not to dwell upon it, for many reasons. I talked to a great friend of mine on the subject. I said something of this kind, that I thought that human beings, if they had any power of expression and any desire to make that expression of use, ought to give some account of real and vital experiences. I went on to say that it seemed cowardly and trivial, if one had passed through a tragic experience, an experience infinitely

more vital and momentous than any that had ever befallen one, which had changed, once and for all, all one's ideas and thoughts and views about life, not to put that experience at the disposal of others. He said to me, "Yes, I agree; but I am quite sure of one thing; an experience like yours may be treated of, and perhaps ought to be treated of; but you must avoid the *physical* element—it must simply be treated psychologically." I saw at once that he was right.

The more I think of it, the more plain does my duty appear. Since my illness I have put all thought of my sufferings aside —indeed I have had little temptation to do otherwise, because of the extraordinary and wonderful influx of delight and interest and zest in life that is the result of it. The long rest, the abstention from all mental or emotional exercise, seem to

have swept my mind clear of innumerable puzzles, and tangles, and questionings. It is like a resurrection from the dead, a new beginning of life, with observation, and admiration, and enthusiasm, all youthfully and delightfully renewed. I had written, no doubt, too many books out of the emotional part of my mind, too introspectively and too intently. The illness was a perfectly natural penalty for excessive brain-work and excessive stimulation. Since I recovered I have worked mainly at tangible, and concrete, and external matters; but as I tried in my earlier books to work out a sort of emotional philosophy, and recommended a very definite point of view, I feel it to be a duty to revise all that in the light of my terrible experience; for terrible as it must be for any one, it is infinitely more terrible to one who has lived consistently, if not in joy, at least in

eager interests and placid pleasures. But the darkness through which I passed, in daily dread and unutterable dismay, has taught me, I believe, some new things about humanity, about the soul, about God. It has simplified many things that were intricate; it has put life in a new proportion. I may say gratefully and humbly that so far from adding shadows to life, the affliction, deep and profound as it was, has brought me nothing but hope and wonder and joy; it has cleansed and fortified life; and indeed the fact that the soul can pass unscathed and undimmed through the blackest darkness which can overwhelm it is surely in itself a proof of its vitality and its divine quality. I do not mean that one passes at a single bound from darkness to light. I have had many dark and troubled hours since my recovery, but the light has shone steadily and triumphantly through them.

In the old story of Perseus, the young hero had to go down to Hades to fetch the hat of darkness, which when worn made him invisible to mortal gaze, and enabled him to approach the Gorgon whom it was his task to slay. He came out of the craggy outlet of Hell pale and grave, stained and blackened to view from traversing the smoke of those subterranean streams of fire, but with the trophy in his hand. If I could but believe that there was any evil beast, injurious and fatal to mankind, that I was meant to kill! But I am no combatant; only a lover of labour, and order, and peaceful ways. Yet it is because I feel that the path I trod, however laborious and orderly it was, was not the way of peace, that I am constrained to speak, and I will speak, God helping me.

II

ONE great calamity befell me in the second summer of my illness: the death of my best and oldest friend by an accident in the Alps. I have told elsewhere something of the life of Herbert Tatham. He had entered Eton with me as a boy, we had gone on to Cambridge together, and had returned to Eton as masters. Besides our constant association in work and recreation, we had gone every year at Easter to some quiet place to work and walk, to talk and read together. His was certainly the ablest mind that I have ever come into contact with. He had an incredible memory, and he saw more quickly and clearly into the heart of a difficult question than any one I had ever known. Such insight

into complicated and obscure subjects as I have ever attained to, was due entirely to him. But besides all this he had the simplest heart and the sweetest temper I have ever known. He was wholly and entirely unambitious. He loved his boys and his work, he loved his quiet family life; he had not a thought of personal distinction, nor the smallest desire for credit or for praise. His purity of heart, his kindliness, his serenity, were incomparable. One of the saddest things about my illness was that I had been wholly separated from him. He had more than once offered to travel with me, but I could not inflict my sore and wounded spirit upon him. I had seen him only once in the whole period, when I was at my worst, wholly devoid of hope and ease, and when I felt what a strain upon his sympathy and geniality the visit was. He could never bear the sight of suffering

unless he could relieve it, and I was past relief.

I was sitting in the early sunshine at Harrogate in a dreary public garden, with invalids promenading along asphalt paths, among garish flower-beds, and with the sound of a band in the air, when my eye fell upon the paragraph. The initials were given wrongly, and the traveller whose death was recorded was said to have come from Cromer. But I knew in a moment the truth, and in the course of the day it was confirmed. Strange to say, though I suffered acutely, with a sense of desolation which I cannot express, with a feeling of rebellion against what seemed so wanton a waste of life and power, the event not only did not throw me back into my miseries, but took me out of myself. I have even dared to fancy something deeper and more strange—that something of his strength and

serenity came to my help. I felt wonderfully and astonishingly near to him in those dark days. His death took from me a companion as dear as a brother, and it brought back memory of joyful and untroubled days with a bitter poignancy. But neither can I deny that from that time I grew stronger and calmer; and I say boldly that I think that his very self helped me. But for a time it cast me into a curious dreamlike mood, when I lived through, in mournful detail, our old and delightful companionship. It brought back our long walks together in mountainous places, taken so often in that comfortable silence and unison that is better than speech; and the long fireside talks, when one said exactly what rose in the mind and as it rose.

How little I had thought, when we climbed the steep slopes of Ditchling Beacon, that day of early spring, when the

snow lay in stained wreaths in the sheltered folds of the hill, that it was to be the last of our walks together! How little I dreamed when I said good-bye to him on a fresh morning, and saw his hand waved in farewell and his anxious smile, and returned as I did to my fears and shadows, that he would be the first to go! I cannot say what that friendship and what that loss have been to me—the best friendship, the saddest loss by far I have ever experienced. I can say nothing more of the event except that I do indeed think that he came to my help, and assisted my failing steps out of the darkness, though at the time it seemed as black as ever, and his loss a calamity which could neither be appeased nor repaired. Thus I spent a haunted summer, travelling wearily about in search of distraction, and returned to my work without hope or joy.

The second year of my wretched state was now drawing to an end. I had accepted a commission, with what reluctance and dismay can hardly be described, to write weekly articles for a Church paper. I was not restricted as to subjects, and I was told that I might use any materials which I had already in hand. As I had a large stock to draw upon of little essays and pieces which had never been published, I undertook to attempt it; when I found to my surprise that, though there were many days when I could write nothing, and could only sit staring in helpless bewilderment at my paper, yet there were other days when I could write with something like my old facility. This helped me greatly, and I was by this time living my ordinary life, teaching a little, accepting invitations to dine out, and even occasionally to read a paper or give an address.

Then came a week in which, though weak and languid, I had a lull in my mental troubles altogether, and found myself calm and serene. I did not dare to formulate any sort of hope as to the future, but after that date the cloud lifted off me for days at a time. It was at Tenby, where I spent the winter of 1909–1910, that I first realised that I was cured. The least over-exertion of body and mind brought the cloud back, but it passed again, and I had many days of quiet enjoyment. I well remember one particular day when we went to visit the ruins of an old episcopal palace, where the low winter sun fell calmly upon ivied towers and ruined walls. A radiant happiness to which I had long been a stranger came back. The stream running clear through the withered reed-beds had its old melody, and the song of a robin, perched in an embrasure of the thick-

walled keep, had a poignant sweetness that brought the tears to my eyes. But I still had a desire to bemoan my sorrow in friendly ears. One bright morning I was walking with a friend, whose faithful kindness and goodness had never failed through my darkest months. We were skirting the cliff-edge, with its steep copses and bramble-brakes, and examining with delight the sea-anemones in the low rock-pools, when the old pain came back, and I said something about the sufferings I endured. My friend smiled at me and stopped me. He said: "You must have noticed that I have not encouraged you ever to speak of your troubles while we have been together here. I know quite well what you have suffered. But you are so clearly and obviously, for all practical purposes, well again, that you must try not to revert even in memory, and still less in talk, to what is past."

It was wise and good advice, and from that moment I spoke of it no more, except to confess thankfully that it was indeed so. And I returned to Cambridge for the term, for the first time for nearly three years, with a sense of interest and vitality and happiness. Of course there were still days when the old misery came back, striking the words from my lips and the pen from my fingers. The wounds of the mind are not healed in a month, but it was now a perfectly bearable thing, and never lasted long.

And then there came to me, after the long enforced rest, a vividness of interest in life, in books, in talk, in ideas, that I had not known for years. The only sorrow that still for a time haunted me was the sense of the feeble ineffectiveness to which in the prime of life I had been reduced. While my contemporaries were finding new

fields of work, new activities, wider ranges of influence, I was sitting listless and dejected, with no zest in life, no interest in events and ideas, often plunged in despair and mental anguish, only thankful if I could discharge my slender duties, and conceal my hopeless miseries from those about me. It is a painful but a wholesome process to find our real level. But I was not too blind to perceive how tenderly I had been held back. If I had been in the occupation of some more important post when my illness came upon me, it would have meant failure to myself, the hampering of work, and ultimately resignation and retirement. I had instead been left with almost the only kind of work that I could do, with a perfectly clear tie to life, and with a task that I could just perform. Meanwhile there had been a wholesome delay in the over-production of hasty books,

all spun out of my one consciousness, vague, introspective, and unbalanced. I had before been working inwards instead of outwards, and I had lost the true perspective of life and thought. But actually owing to my illness I had been able to get the rest I required, without severing my hold on practical life and definite duties. I saw at last that I had been faithfully and wisely humiliated. I had done my old work in a pretentious spirit, not exactly for show, but certainly for effect. I had tried to satisfy my enjoyment and my vanity alike. I had tried to do things easily and impressively, and I had sacrificed quiet duty to restless satisfaction. This was my reward. *Justo judicio condemnatus sum.* I had been very frankly and sincerely shown what my chance might have been, if I had but developed my own strength and hopefulness. But I had done

neither. I had just aimed at easy relations all round. I had been interested as a schoolmaster in my boys, and tried to keep the tone of my little state pure and contented. But there had been no self-sacrifice about it; and I had pursued other ambitions as well. I saw at last that my chances had not been taken from me but actually given me. That I had been given work exactly adapted to my capacities. As I had made so little of the talents entrusted to me, I was at last set to deal faithfully if I could with a minute deposit. And meanwhile my alleviations were immense. They were sent me, I think, with a compassionate kindness, like toys to a fractious child. I had loved ease and comfort, money and dignity, friendship and culture, and they were handed me in abundance, because I was not worthy of the higher gifts. My very illness would have had a tragic significance for one more

enthusiastic and high-hearted. But for me it was made comparatively easy by the trivial buoyancy of my nature, and the kind of feeble courtesy that come of vague ideals loosely held. The clouds had indeed broken in blessings on my head; and I was out of the dark valley at last, in the land of Beulah, with all sorts of pretty woodland prospects about me, and the company of contented shepherd-folk. Not only did I never regret or resent my miseries, when they were once over, but against the dark background the charm and interest of my quiet life outlined itself in a delicate radiance. All this came home to me in a flash when an old friend spoke to me with a tender condolence of the check to a promising career that my illness had been. I saw that it was not a check at all; it was just a scorching up of uneasy vanities and perfectly unattainable ambitions. And

thus the valley of humiliation became to me, as to Christian, the very happiest region of the whole pilgrimage. There were larger things which it brought me, of which I may presently speak; but meantime the song of the shepherd-boy with the heartsease in his bosom was mine:

> He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride.

And I echoed it with all my might.

I had written in a previous book, *Beside Still Waters,* in a highly-tinted allegory, of my own career. What was wrong with that book was its solemn self-consciousness. I thought that I was doing a fine unworldly thing to seek a retirement in the prime of life. But it was meant, I see, though not consciously, to draw a charming picture of contemplative seclusion, and to arouse the envy of the hustled and hurried. What I

am now describing is very different from that. There is every reason why I should not withhold my new experience from others. Others may have the same dreadful path to traverse, and may have to face the same severe extinguishing of personal aims and ambitions. What I want to say as clearly as I can is this, that it is possible not only to endure a discipline which seems from day to day perfectly insupportable; but that it is also possible to come out at the end in sober gratitude and hopefulness, with one's limitations clearly defined, one's path perfectly clear. I do not say that ambition dies so easily as that. But there is here no attempt at self-glorification. It is a humble confession of a great failure; a failure to use powers and opportunities, a failure to win usefulness and influence, and a failure, too, to make a little earthly paradise, from which all harsh

elements were to be fastidiously excluded. There may be further experiences ahead worth the telling; but this I hardly anticipate. I now write for the comfort of others and not for my own delight, except the natural delight of the wayfarer in his escape from the whirlpool, and the monsters of the deep, and the beguiling goddess in the woodland isle.

III

THE malady itself is the most grievous that can be borne, because it is the malady which is behind all pain and suffering. Pain and suffering from other causes register themselves upon a certain part of the brain, but in this malady that very portion of the brain is in itself tortured, so that it pours back the sensation of suffering upon all impressions alike, whether glad or grievous. Every memory and every association is poisoned, for the sick mind says to itself, when it receives a pleasurable emotion, that there was a time when this was delightful; but now it merely serves to mark and emphasise the contrast, and thus all delight is poisoned at the source, and the only refuge for the brain is to escape

as far as it can from all impressions whatsoever. Even affection and sympathy are but as fuel to the malign fire; they bring no comfort, and the mere act of apprehending them is in itself pain.

The one question then that emerges out of all this grievous chastening is, what does it all mean, what is the significance of it all for myself and for others? Let me try to be perfectly honest with myself. I look back and see myself starting in the race with no evil intentions, but on the other hand with no unselfish or noble aspirations, loving ease and amusement and comfort above everything; with no deep or passionate affections, and yet constituted to win affection easily; with certain definite powers and activities, with the gift, I think, of making a certain side of life, both in speech and writing, clear and attractive to others. These powers were taken from me. One

cannot communicate a joy one does not feel, and one of the heavy burdens of this terrible illness is to make one indifferent to beauty, to interest, to emotion, to life. Did I find myself stronger, more patient, more brave? By no means; it was, in fact, just the opposite. I found myself lazy, listless, drowsy, indifferent, more impatient every day of the burden of fear and apprehension and melancholy, more inclined to catch at every small alleviation. That is the worst of wearing pain of mind, that it takes away one's power and will to fight. And though I might wish to serve others, as I did a little in the old days out of the abundance of my zest and enjoyment, I had now nothing to give them, nothing to share with them. I did not find that I became even habituated to suffering. Rather I think that every access of the long malady was more sickening and disheartening.

Neither did it give me any power of helping myself. I turned in moments of anguish to any source of help and comfort: my spirit seemed to beat the void with urgent wings, like the bird sent out from the ark, and found everywhere the welter-ing waste of waters. No human eye could test my misery, no hand could soothe it, and God seemed indifferent to my pain. If I myself by some accidental stroke crush and maim a delicate insect, I can at least end its misery; I do not stand and see it wither with pitiless disdain. And here lay the bitterest anguish of all, that it was the God who had made me that thus chastened me. I saw the root of my evils—it was my want of courage, of energy, of self-discipline, my blindness to noble motives, my impatient desire for momentary plea-sure; but I did not make myself thus. These were the qualities I found in myself, and

it seemed that I was chastened for being what I was made to be. Worst of all, I was given an instinct for justice, and a sense of what was fair, and I could see no justice in what had befallen me. It was as though one had seen that a child loved something bright and sweet, and that one had then left at its elbow some fragrant and fair potion, with a deadly and hurtful drug intermingled, had watched it drink the evil thing, and then mocked at its sufferings. For here lay my woe, that I was given so passionate a love for all that was beautiful and desirable, that I had no deeper impulse to turn to what was nobler and greater; and that by following my instinct I had come into stony places and desert wilds. And yet the destruction of delight had not sown in me any seed of nobler things. Rather my hours were spent in retracing the old joys. I called

to remembrance my song. Neither had I learned, as some grim philosophers affirm that they learned, that these delights of life are vanity. Joy and peace, the sights and sounds of nature, the pleasures of work and life, books and art and music—these things all seemed to me infinitely more desirable than before. I was as one that lay in a prison, and peering through the bars saw love and health, warmth and light, stream past outside, with movement and laughter, warmth and perfume. There was no change in these sweet things; the change, the bitter change, was in me. Yet it was not that I would not have learned if I could. If I could but have felt within myself the quickening of some nobler and freer spirit, I should have counted my loss to be gain. Yet the days flowed past, and I sank each hour deeper in indolence and futile regret and despair. Was this the message of God

to the soul? I would have trusted and loved Him if I could, but between us there was a great gulf fixed, and I could not bridge it.

What then remained? A life, however small and circumscribed, to be lived, souls to whom I was linked by love and by associations, duties to be performed, words to be spoken, deeds to be done. And a sense, remote and dim, but there, that God had not deserted me, though He hid His face from me for a season. How this remained and survived I knew not. All that I had lost, all that I might have done if I had been purer and stronger of will, they pierced me like thorns. But I knew that as His Will seems to be for others that they should ascend from strength to strength, in light and love and joy, so His Will for me was that I should descend into self-contempt, and despair, and humiliation, but

that the end was not yet. And I recognised, too, in myself a power, undimmed and eager, for casting off the shadows of grief. Even now the remembrance of the dark years I have passed has no power over me. They brighten in retrospect; the beautiful things remain, the dark hours are swept away like crumbling ashes.

IV

ONE of the most melancholy of my flights, in my time of trouble, was to Ashbourne —melancholy, because it was exactly the kind of place which in health I should have enjoyed best—a beautiful town, its great church, its gabled school, its fine Georgian houses all speaking of a fine tradition, a civic pride; and then it is close to Dovedale, that craggy valley, so dear to Isaac Walton, with all its loveliness of minature crag and hanging woodland. There, too, three faithful friends and delightful companions came to me, one by one, to cheer my loneliness. But I was there assailed by a poignancy of melancholy which is indescribable. We were lodged in a fine old country mansion, now an inn, at the end

of the street. There was a rookery close to my bedroom, and I used to awake early on those fine spring mornings, the clear light filtering in through the window curtains, and hear the drowsy cawing of the rooks answering each other from their perches, and toss from side to side, hour by hour, in an agony of despair.

I went there again the other day, and had the same room. Not only did I experience no morbid overshadowing of gloom, but the busy and contented present outlined itself with radiant gratitude on the dark background of memory; more than that! To my inexpressible surprise, I could not recall or recover my grief. I could just remember that I had been plunged in sorrow; but in all the walks that I took, which I know were then taken in heaviness and indifference, I remembered all the details, with extraordinary vividness, while

memory persisted in representing my previous visit as a time of radiant and unalloyed happiness. I went to the church, where I had attended a service, racked by mental torture, and it seemed familiar and sweet. I walked down Dovedale; and though I had done so on the former occasion with listless fatigue, yet the mind continued to recall the scene as if it had been viewed with zest and delight. What a marvellous alchemy that is which can eliminate all the dark shadows of the past as if they had never existed, and can present one with a picture of the scene, all touched with a golden light of happy reminiscence; can unconsciously transmute all the sad values, and substitute for the sombre endurance, through which all was viewed, a strange reality of happiness and content. Day after day I used then to say to myself that life could not be endured

under such conditions; the smallest accident, such as a rain-storm or a delay, used to fill me with a petulant agitation; the smallest trace of dissatisfaction on the part of my companions seemed an insuperable difficulty; yet it required a deliberate effort of the reason to recall them now, and the instinctive recollection of the whole was one of easy pleasure and delightful experience.

This power of the mind to reject all sadness in retrospect is surely a very hopeful and wonderful thing. It shows one that experience, however tragical, has no power to wound or cicatrise. If memory survives the mortal frame, there need be nothing which it need dread to regard. Failures, sorrows, even sins may be seen in that blessed light as things which contributed their part to the shaping of the soul. One will not even regret them, for they are but signs of imperfection, steps of a heavenly

ladder which it is well to have climbed. If one thinks, perhaps, of wrongs done to others, angers, peevish meannesses, vexations, stupidities, one would suppose that they at least could not be glorified; but if one feels that the memory of the person wronged has not only forgotten the sting of our misdemeanour, but has actually built the poor incidents into the clear-walled and glowing palace of memory, what need is there to regret them? We need take no heed of what is past and done with; all has contributed its delicate share to the treasure of experience, and memory has transfigured it into something rich and strange. It is not that we deceive ourselves by this radiant retrospect. We rather deceive ourselves when we fret and agonise over the present and its troubles. The needed process is at work, the necessary discipline is being gone through. Not

only will all be well, it will be actually glorious to retrace. It is the work, this blessed transformation, of the inner soul which dwells within us, which is high, generous, joyful, and indomitable. It is the reason and the imagination which play us false; the inner soul is wiser, and like an auriferous stream, drifts the precious metal into every rift and cavity.

The strange thing is that our happy hours pass so swiftly, so indistinctly at the time, the lazy contentment of the mood finding every trivial detail abundantly sweet. When we have to face grief, how slow and leaden-footed are the creeping hours; how sorely we are tempted to think of happiness as the delusion, and of sorrow as the bitter truth! Yet the time passes; and we turn at some angle of the road and look back, surveying the quiet valley through which we have passed so miserably with bleeding

feet and gasping breath. And behold, the heart has thrown all that aside, has touched with prismatic hues all that it is good to have suffered; thereby showing, if I but interpret it rightly, that we could not do without it, and that even in our hours of darkest blindness we have never strayed out of the reach of the guiding and saving Hand.

V

ONE of my worst fears during much of my illness was that of a sudden collapse of my mental faculties. There were times when I could only sit helpless, with the horror rising and growing upon me, overwhelming everything with an agony that brimmed my being. What if it all boiled up like a devil's cauldron, and left me raving and frenzied? There were times when I felt that if any one came upon me suddenly, I could hardly have framed an intelligible phrase; yet if it ever did so happen, I found I could always respond, close the lid, so to speak, of the throbbing and seething vessel, and talk almost as usual. Yet the fear was so strong, that I carried about with me all that time an envelope of directions as to

what was to be done in the case of a collapse, and it was a blessed day when I felt myself entitled to put the dreadful missive in the flames!

I have often wondered whether I could in any way have controlled and mastered that fear; it was an unreal thing in a way, because my faculties were in no way impaired; and yet the tortured mind enacted over and over again, with a dark fertility of imagination, the possibilities that might be in store for me. But the will seemed powerless to help me.

Fear is a very strange and terrible part of our human inheritance. But the *raison d'être* of it is, I suppose, the instinct to live. If it were not for fear, the fear of death, how often should we tend to end our miseries altogether, and how little effort should we make in the face of danger to extricate ourselves. Fear, at a crisis,

evokes the swiftest kind of inventiveness, and it is, I suppose, the quality which more than any other keeps us alive.

But what a sickening hand it lays on our joys! If one is surprised in a moment of joy by a sudden fear, not only does it sweep away the joy, but it makes one wonder that one could ever have had the heart or the courage to enjoy anything. Yet it is a very specific thing. The knowledge that we must some time die does not trouble one in the least in ordinary life. And even men who are stricken by mortal disease, when they have once got used to the thought, seem to lose their fear, and even to have the pleasure of the secure moment heightened by its presence. The strange fact is this, that though I have never known any incident in the world, however tragic or appalling, come up to the fear with which one anticipates it, yet one

cannot learn to control fear. I am thinking as I write of a tragic event that once came on me very suddenly. If I had been told beforehand that it was impending, I could not have borne it; but when it did come, I went through it with a curious serenity, equal to all emergencies.

The more one indulges fear, the more one practises it, the more one allows oneself to entertain it, the worse it grows. It is better not to look tragedies in the face unless one is obliged. One cannot school oneself into indifference so; and one meets fear better, the more joyful and indifferent one has allowed oneself to be. There is a curious instinct in humanity to hold back from joy. It is that which comes out so strongly in the old Greek conception of the jealousy felt by the gods against the over-fortunate man. In the Greek theory of life the successful man is first joyful, and then his

joy takes on an insolent quality; and that is the sign that what they called Ate—fatality—is just ahead. One sees the same instinct in the Romans and in the Jews. The well-schooled mind, says Horace, is timid in prosperity; the Hebrew Psalmist says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This fear is not the fear which restrains from sin, but rather the fear that prosperity holds within itself the seed of calamity—the higher the triumph the deeper the fall!

The truth is that we know, though we often forget it, that we are set in the world to get experience; and when we are summing up the life of some great man, we do not ask ourselves if he was continually prosperous, so much as whether, in his life, he had the due and inevitable proportion of failure and suffering.

There is then no real reason why we

should fear whatever lies before us; and instead of yielding to fear, with the instinctive sense that we are doing something which is vaguely righteous, propitiating in some way the wrath of Heaven, as a dog that is angrily called throws itself on its back in a helpless abandonment of deprecation, we ought rather to distract ourselves in every way, and exorcise fear by work, by occupation, by studied joy. "I have had many tragedies in my life," said an old statesman, "and the worst were those which never happened."

I shall speak elsewhere of the two strains of life that are so strangely intermingled in every one of us—the outer rational life of convention and habit and daily intercourse; and the inner, secret, moving current of the soul. It is the rational and imaginative faculty which indulges fear; and therefore it is well to live as far as

one can in the inner life, the solitary, steady, untroubled life of the soul. That is the secret of that strange and notable movement called Christian Science, and indeed of all quietist and mystical movements. Christian Science is much encumbered by false and even fatuous metaphysic; but the essence and strength of it is that its votaries constantly practise diving, so to speak, through the outer, busy, fretted, rational life of the temporary and finite human faculties, into the deep serene inner current of the soul. It is not necessary to profess the confused dogmas of Christian Science in order to do this. But to do the thing itself is the only way to triumph over the dreary and entangling impediments of bodily life. The mistake is to try to pretend that the outer evil is not there at all. It is there, it is urgent and strong, and for all its discomfort it does many won-

derful things for us. But it is only a passing thing, like the water-break upon the stream's surface, and the permanent crystalline current of peace is beneath it all the time. The real conquest is to perceive the true values. If we are deluded by the phantoms of respectability, convention, ambition, success, comfort, property, we shall continue to fear, because fear is knit up with these things. But if we realise that simplicity and generosity and joy, loving relations and true comradeship, are the true life, then fear ebbs away, because it is not knit up with these things; and at last we come to perceive that there is no tunnel so dark and long through which the soul does not pass unscathed and undaunted, and comes out, pale perhaps and a little wearied, but smiling, into the daylight at the end.

VI

THE pain of it all was torturing enough, but it was not crushing. It did not cow the innermost spirit. I come back to life, not afraid of it—afraid indeed of the pain itself and the suffering, but not afraid of life. The sails torn a little, but with more wind than ever in them. Because though there were indeed days wholly of pain, when it seemed as though one had found the very deepest thing in life, there was always a possibility in the background, a blessed possibility that the strain might be relaxed; and that life was there all the time, outside the dark tower and the room where the punctual rack lay waiting.

And I come back with a deeper curiosity

than ever as to what has relieved the pain. I cannot pretend that I ever felt at the time as though love lay behind it; but there was force and motion behind it. The horror of it was that the pain seemed to reach me, and to stop there; it did not seem to be passing through me onwards, but as if it pushed me against an ultimate wall of things. That was the weakness of my case all along, that I never handed things on; they came to me, I received them, and there they stayed. That was how I was missing the meaning of life, because the meaning of life seems to be involved in this, that one must not wish to keep things, but to hand them on. While the best thing that came to me, my song, as the Psalmist said, had been uttered for my own joy, and not that I might sing it for other ears. Now the sorrow lies in this, that I do perceive, as clearly as it can be perceived, that the

strength and significance of life lies, not in the apprehension or the enjoyment of fine and beautiful things and thoughts, but in the desire to share them with others, or better still, to give them away. And it seems to me that the more clearly one perceives the lights and hues and shapes of things, the charm and delicacy of them, their values and their deficiencies even, the more difficult it becomes to part with them. It was thus that I had lived; and all that I seemed to do for others was done not for the sake of others, but just to give myself the tranquillity I required to see and to enjoy. In my twenty years of teaching it had been just thus—that I had laboured for peace and order and beauty and purity, not because I passionately desired that others should taste of such things, but that I might taste them myself in security and peace. I could recognise that to lose my-

self would be to find myself; but how was that to be achieved? I saw others courageously and frankly doing their supposed duty, however unpleasant. But that very often never seemed to touch their inner heart at all, because, like myself, they did not seem to give themselves away thus, but to enhance their own indomitable solitariness. And on the other hand one saw people who, without any theory of duty or justice or right, gave themselves and their work away from hour to hour, simply and sweetly, because it was their way to do it, not their choice. My old nurse, who died lately after being long bedridden, and but half conscious of the passage of the hours, was one of these people; she never thought of happiness at all, or even consciously of duty; she simply gave her whole life and activity and thought to those whom she loved. She had a shrewd and not

wholly tolerant judgment of others, but she made no comparisons of them with herself. She just went about her own business, had no desire of ease or pleasure: if one of us was ill, it was just her joy and delight to tend us, to bear every detailed task in mind. It was not self-surrender, because it had nothing to do with the will at all. It was not beneficence or benevolence, it was simply love; and thus it was the most beautiful and perfect thing in the world, because there was nothing calculated or forced about it; it flowed as the stream flows, it was sweet at the rose is sweet. It seemed like the beating of the world's very heart, like the breath of its inmost soul.

I suppose then that the mistake I may make about even my own great and dark experience is that I am tempted to think, "What have I gained by it?" It seemed

at the time as though one only radiated pain among all who saw one suffer and could not help. Even if one tried to take a larger sweep, and ask, "Was there gain anywhere, was one even bearing so much of the weight, the inevitable sorrow of the world? was one, by drinking so much of the bitter cup, diminishing for the rest some of the pain which there must be in life?"; there seemed no answer to that. It was the not knowing whether it had any bearing at all on the world or oneself that made it all so hard to bear. Without that knowledge, the pain seemed such an unimaginable waste of life. Even to know that it was a waste would have been something, for then it could at least have been co-ordinated. But what one hoped was of course that it might be but the slag of the furnace, a thing ugly and homely enough, which had had its use,

and might have it again, but without which the flame could not give up its secret, or melt the frozen metal for the service of men.

VII

BUT there was one blessed fact which dawned upon me slowly in the evil days. When I was at my worst, inaction and action alike were poisonous, thought and emotion and memory were a sort of fevered agony, the smallest decision was a torture. I seemed to myself like a man who has wandered heedlessly along the rocks of some iron-bound coast, with the precipices above him on one hand and the sullen sea on the other hand. I had reached, as it were, a ledge, from which advance and retreat seemed equally impossible; the cliff overhead, with its black and dripping crags, was too steep to climb, and I seemed to be waiting for the onrush of some huge and silent billow from the bitter surge be-

neath. I was at bay at last, helpless and hopeless. But behind it all I never somehow lost the sense that though every channel of perception and thought, every nerve of reflection and decision seemed choked and palsied, there was yet some inner citadel where my life and spirit were free and unassailed. It was the machinery, the bodily pain, that was disordered, not the innermost spring of life. I had never been able before to draw any fine line between body and mind and spirit. They had all jogged cheerfully along together, had sorrowed in concert, or uttered their song in unison. But now I did indeed perceive that there was something within, which was not only unaltered by all these woes, but actually unalterable; something on which the rage of all the elements might expend itself, and yet not maim or wound or crush it in the smallest degree. The

joy, the emotion, the energy, the spring of life were there, a divine unquenchable flame—something which might be released from the body, but which could not be destroyed or dissolved. More than that; it was a principle which, in spite of all my carelessness and selfishness and love of pleasure on the one hand, all my weariness and discomfort and frailty on the other, was still essentially pure and bright, courageous and strong. It could not express itself in any mortal terms of hope, or activity, or happiness,—every effort to do so set the diseased nerves throbbing and tingling with misery insupportable—but it was there for all that, in its pristine and ancient strength.

I cannot say that this gave me any strength or courage; it was only a certainty, a fact which I could not doubt; it was the essential fact of existence, behind

which I could not go, the one thing which even death could not silence or terminate. There was no question of effort or of patience here; that one thing alone, that vital essence of joy and strength, I could not touch nor change. It was something even deeper than self, for it had no desires unfulfilled, or hopes unrealised; it existed, it saw, it knew. It could not flash its secret back into the tired and wearied brain, or revive the drooping limb; but it was something permanent and everlasting. It had no sense of struggle or strife; it was not concerned with duty or honour, shame or pain—it simply existed. I have said that the thought gave me no joy or help—it was even the other way, because I knew that oblivion was not possible. There was hardly a day during those months when I would not have welcomed death, sudden and swift death,—anything to still that

ceaseless pain that gnawed like the Promethean vulture at the heart; but I knew that it would but be like the hunting of some wild thing out of its hole, to slip away into the brake. I had before lightly held the current belief about immortality, and had vaguely dreamed of the soul as a thing in unsubstantial human form, the thoughts and occupations of which I could not imagine. The thought of heaven as a concourse of untiring vocalists, with God as a complacent auditor, had long seemed incredibly puerile—I had thought of the afterlife as a place of growth and energy and experience; but now I could not feel even that, because the central principle, free alike from matter and from intellect, appeared to be something so much older and wiser and more absolute than anything I had ever conceived. It was not that it could inform the intellect, or react upon

the mind; they still seemed condemned to guess and wonder, and approach truth tentatively and experimentally. But the soul was above all that, though it could not make its secret clear to me.

How can I express the inexpressible? No analogies will make it clear. The soul seemed to inhabit my body as a man inhabits a house; but though the house seemed ruinous and tottering to its fall, squalid and darkly shuttered, the inhabitant seemed in no way disconcerted or concerned, but preparing, if need was, to leave it. I had no sort of hope of recovering my health or activity. I simply looked forward to some hideous collapse of brain and body alike; and meanwhile the inhabitant held on his way, executed his designs, and gave no hint of his will. When I reproached myself with my heedless and trivial life, my foolish passing-by

of opportunities, my dulness and perversity, the soul said nothing either of comfort or of blame. I did not feel that it judged me harshly, or made excuses for me; it seemed occupied with other things, and serene, waiting till it could again look out from the unclosed shutters of the mind, perfectly equable and undisturbed.

And now that my activity has returned to me, and the brain after its long frost seems all blossoming with ideas and emotions and interests, I feel that the soul is still there, unchanged, unscathed. It does not seem to have either lost or gained by the experience; body and mind alike have learned lessons of vigilance and prudence, not to waste their powers prodigally, to take up deliberate occupations of varying stress, to rest upon the oars. But the soul seems to smile at all these concerns, as it smiled at the disasters of sickness and de-

spair, and to hold upon its own course. It is like a bird of the woodland that is caged; it eats and drinks, it hops from perch to perch, it trills its song; but it is content to wait, and it does not grieve, or flutter its useless wings.

I have told all this experience as simply as I can. It may not be an unusual one; it may be that others may have from the earliest dawn of consciousness this sense of difference between the bodily and intellectual life, and the life of the soul. I can only say that the experience was new to me, that it was infinitely surprising and startling, and that it has survived the return to normal health and activity. If I am asked what it has brought me, I can only say that it has brought me a sense of permanent truth. It has not given me new motives for conduct, new ideals, new desires. I find myself much as I was be-

fore, desiring friendship and close relation with others, eager for work, susceptible to beauty, fond of delightful thoughts. The sights and sounds of earth are as dear as ever. The soft shining of the sun through the orchard, the distant sweep of woodland and valley, the old house, with its gables and lichened tiles—all these please my sense as before. The fading of the evening light, the star that peeps from the thickening gloom, the sighing of the wind among the pines, the stream rippling over its stony channel—I think they are all more dear than ever. The joy of life has come back to me with a freshness and a sweetness that I never knew. The pain and the weariness are gone, and have been as a bath in some fresh tide that seems to have washed my mind clean of all its nebulous woes; but what I lacked before, a sense of everlastingness, of permanence, of being

impervious to change and death, that has come to me in fullest measure. It has not at all enlightened the mystery of life. I understand no more than I did the secrets of love and beauty, of pain and death; but I know that I can wait—indeed, more than that, I know that I am, and shall be, and cannot cease to be. The adjustment of relations with others, with time, with space, with matter, is all as dark as ever; but I know that nothing can be hurried or shortened, but that every single step of the road must be trodden, and trodden alone; and I feel too that in no other way could I have learned this, except by entering a darkness in which every faculty of life and joy, every tie with the world, every energy and activity not only failed me, but became one mass as it were of tortured fibres, so that there was neither outlet or relief. And so far from thinking of the days of misery

with a shuddering horror, I am grateful for every touch of pain, every sleepless hour of agony, every moment of abject and unutterable fear. Thus and in no other way could the fact come home to me that there is something in and behind every individual life which is absolutely there, can be hurt by no suffering, and touched by no decay.

VIII

It was in these days of recovered health that I had another great lesson in the same matter, which came like the blow of a hammer that drives a nail home. I was asked to go and see an old friend who had been very ill—his life indeed having been despaired of. He had won his way back to a little strength, but it was known that he could not live long. I went to see him in a very nervous and solemn frame of mind; though I knew it was unreal, and was ashamed of myself for my solemnity, yet I could not divest myself of the instinctive feeling that it was an occasion. In vain I told myself that what the sick most value is to be talked to quite naturally and easily of normal things and ordinary in-

terests, with no reference to the illness that besets them. I knew well from my own experience the relief of being in the company of people who ignored one's unhappy condition, and talked as if all was well. Still, that strange sort of dramatic instinct, which many of us have and which is so hard to get rid of, kept suggesting a solemn scene and appropriate remarks.

The sick man was lying in a room on the ground-floor looking out into a garden. I was very much shocked at his deathly appearance, the lines of pain about his eyes and brow, his fallen cheek, his helpless hands. His voice, as he greeted me, seemed to come from some far-off place, and was like the sighing of a wind. I made some commonplace remark and sat down. We talked for a minute or two about indifferent matters, when I became suddenly aware that in spite of the fact

that the poor body was nearing its dissolution, my friend was there, behind that strange mask, exactly as he had always been, shrewd, perceptive, humorous, tender-hearted. There was no change in him whatever, except that what he said came a little more slowly than of old, and that breath failed him at intervals. So I began to speak of ordinary things—of books, of events, of people. There he was all the time, his old self, interested, amused, clear-sighted. He knew well that his days were numbered, and I knew it too; and though for an instant, every now and then, we seemed to wave hands and smile across a sundering and broadening flood, which must soon divide us altogether; though I knew that we must henceforth journey on separately, till the little figure on the further shore should grow dim to my straining eyes, and that he must at last turn his

back, and fare onwards into the silent land; yet I saw that his spirit, his thought, his character were unchanged and unchangeable, though perhaps a little wiser and more affectionate through the endurance of pain and dismay. And so I discerned that it was weak and cowardly to be afraid or sad; the affair was full of wonder, of truth, of interest even; we were as much to each other as we had ever been, our spirits as strong and vivid and untiring, as apt for companionship. I saw that all that was happening was that he was bound on a journey which I should some day have to take, and that it was for him but the opening of a new experience, a new range of wonders; and that just as life had been familiar and sweet, so the new life for him was to be as full and eager. I could make no guess as to what his new experience would be, but I saw that it was certain to

be no more lacking in what was pleasant, active, and exciting than the life of the world. When a child is born into the world, one of the most wonderful things to watch is how utterly it takes its surroundings for granted; it nestles to its mother's breast, it does not doubt that it is welcome; then as it begins to perceive what is happening to it, to look round it with intelligence, it smiles, it understands love, it imitates words, it claims the rights of home and family; it has not the least sense of being a stranger or a sad exile; all that it sees belongs to it and is its own. So will it be with the new birth, I make no doubt; we shall enter upon the unseen world with the same sense of ease and security and possession; there will even be nothing to learn at first, nothing to inquire about, nothing to wonder at. We shall just fall into our new place unquestioning and un-

questioned; it will be familiar and dear, our own place, our own circle. The child is never in any doubt as to who it is and where it is; and in the vast scheme of things, our little space of experience is assured to us for ever.

I do not mean that there is not the sense of sorrow and grief, while we are divided; that is inevitable; but there is no room for fear; the faithless thought is to suppose that anything is over or lost; it is weak and traitorous to dwell in thought on the old serene, happy days, when strong and eager life and hope were ours; the hope awaits us, the strength is undiminished.

It was a great and joyful moment when I realised that my friend was at his post; it was as though he looked with a smile out of the windows of a ruinous house; how little it mattered, in the presence of his strength and serenity, that the earthly

business was for a time interrupted! But I saw that the reason that the business of earth was pleasant, was not because the acts and duties themselves had any value; they were only agreeable because of the strength and energy of the spirit that used them, as a child plays with bricks and dolls. It is the joy of the child, his strength, his imagination, that puts meaning into his toys. It is a castle he is making, it is a child that he is tending; the brick, the doll, is but a symbol of some inner thought, some cheerful design.

We said no word that day of parting or of suffering or of suspended activity. We just talked as we had always talked, and planned another meeting; and I came away with a sense that outer things simply mattered not at all; that I and my friend had all time before us, all experience to taste, all sorts of joys and hopes and activities

to deal with. It seemed so wide and unexhausted, the long energy that stretched before us; and in the sense of immortality, which shone like a great sun of warmth and light upon us, it seemed idle to regard the little interruptions of sickness and even death, that were but as the shadows of flying clouds upon a vast plain of life, over which passed a great host of pilgrims, some loitering, some making haste, but with friends on every side, and happy concourse, and all the little pleasures and interests of the way, so keenly felt, so eagerly enjoyed!

IX

It is not too much then to say that my illness revealed to me the existence of the soul, an essence profound, imperishable, divine, something wholly apart from the physical life, the intellectual life, and even the moral life. It may be said that I ought to have discovered this before, brought up in religious belief as I had been, fond of speculating about the problems of existence, and interested or believing myself interested in all that concerned the inner life. But it had escaped me for all that. I had in reality lived a very spectatorial life, delighting much in ocular impressions, in forms and colours, in the picturesque and romantic qualities of things seen. I had led, moreover, an intellectual life, interested

in books and ideas, and the record of human personalities; it had all been a very artistic business, things, landscapes, buildings, even persons, delighting me, by giving me the perception of their characteristic qualities and peculiar charm. But now in my time of suffering the whole of that interest was gone. I found myself unable to read or think clearly. Whatever I saw or heard which evoked any interest or emotion, now caused me indescribable agitation and pain. A beautiful prospect, an ancient building, a delightful person, simply struck me with a desolate pang at the thought of all the joy and brightness I had lost. One of my commonest thoughts was to say to myself, "How I could have enjoyed this!" and the horror that came from the sense that all joyful perception was poisoned at the source was the deepest part of my pain. I cannot describe the unutterable melan-

choly which the sights and sounds of a beautiful summer day used to cause me. To sit in the midst of beauty, the sunlight falling on leaves and grass, and on the gables of the old house with all its climbing roses; to see far away the foreground melting into the distance, the woods, the sloping fields, the road winding away over the shoulder of the hill, the long calm line of the distant down, was misery untold; and the sense of lingering in the centre of it all, a diseased, broken, shrinking creature, without delight or prospect of delight, and with the joys of life falling like fiery arrows on the tortured and sensitive brain, was a source of incredible wretchedness. And there too was the helpless feeling that I could do nothing to recover what I had lost; that I must suffer hour by hour, only thankful if I could conceal a little of my misery from those about me, and just

play my part in life with courtesy and decency.

But as the days became weeks, and the weeks months, with no cessation of my wretchedness, I became aware, in glimpses first, and then with a steady certainty, that I myself was behind it all, unhurt and untouched by the wretchedness in which I was involved. I was like a man who has lost his sight, but yet feels that the power of receiving and interpreting impression is there, though the door of vision is closed. I became aware that the body was at fault, that the machinery of thought was unstrung, that the power of feeling and perceiving was hampered; but I saw all the time that the deficiency was in my stricken frame, and that not only were the things themselves as true and beautiful and real as ever, but that I knew within myself that it was so, and retained the inner power of

judging, and loving, and admiring, even though I could not exercise it.

I do not say that this helped me to recover my health. It seemed to have no effect upon it at all. It made me even more conscious how unable the body was to respond to any impression, or desire, or aspiration. But I learned that the self, the identity, the inner essence of being was as strong, as fresh, as vital, as imperishable as ever. I had hitherto confused, I now saw, the machinery of perception and life and consciousness with the inner life; but now at last I perceived that there was some secret fortress of the soul which nothing could conquer or subdue. I was for a time like a man in a dark and chilly dungeon, in which the fingers of the light just travel day by day from the loophole above him across the dripping and mildewed wall; but I knew that even if I slipped still deeper

into misery, if my reason were to give way, if death itself came to me—so often, so ardently desired—I should yet be there.

This tremendous experience ought, if fully appreciated, to have delivered me once and for all from materialistic tyrannies, but that was not the case. As health returns, the body reasserts its delight in sun and air, in food and exercise, in sight and sound—and one would not for a moment wish it otherwise; but it has relieved me from one quality which was formerly strong in me—the sense of acquisitiveness and delight in property. I do not mean that one does not desire the conveniences of life; but in the old days I had a strong sense of possession, and the feeling that books, and pictures, and furniture were in a peculiar way one's own *κειμήλια*, as the Greeks called them—as when in the parable the soul said to itself that it had much

goods laid up for many years. The sense of possession, as I say, has deserted me. The fact was brought home to me in a curious way. I had my pleasant house in the fenland near Ely, in which I had collected all sorts of properties, old furniture, family memorials, plate, conveniences of every sort, which pleased the eye and the mind. It had been in that house that my illness had slowly gained upon me, and all the time that I was ill, I had felt a curious shrinking from visiting it. I had planned it all for a self-contained and happy life, and I could not bear to see the destruction of my dream. Near the end of my illness I had an opportunity of letting it to a friend, just as it was; and soon after I became well, or when I was becoming well, I went over there for a day. I could not at first realise what had happened to me. I found myself looking at all my

treasured possessions with a sense of entire detachment and even curiosity. I saw them through the eyes of a stranger, with no sense of possession, and hardly any desire for possession; and then when I was better still, I began to spend money on various designs, the money which strangely enough had accumulated fast in my time of illness.

But the sense of special personal property seems to have departed from me. Side by side with this, my desire for personal distinction has died down. But this I look upon rather with distrust, because I am not sure that it is more than a certain terror of the trouble, the social exactions, the dreary engagements of which the ambitious man has to accept the burden. Still it is a relief not to hunger and hanker for recognition, to be content to value my friends for their pleasantness, not

for their distinction; to choose the life which interests me, not the life which makes me prominent. All this my illness stripped from me. The result is, from the worldly point of view, a certain failure, the reputation of a man just not strong enough to seize his chances, and afraid of responsibility. But what counterbalances this is a grateful contentment in simple work, a hope of being quietly useful, a far more real and vital happiness, and last of all, what I mean to write of more fully, a deep desire for closer relations with other people, a need to give and to receive affection, and a belief in the experiences of love as being the one thing which we are meant at all costs in our human life to cultivate and cling to.

X

In my new-found joy I passed down the little flagged path beside the yew-hedge, leading to the orchard. The sun-dial on my right hardly emerged from its clump of lavender, and there was lichen on the slab. She who planned and devised it, and planted the fragrant shrubs—such little stocks they were then!—was here no longer; and it was on this very place that, pointing to the far-off road which curved steeply through the coverts, just visible over the high-seeded orchard grass, in a day of still summer, she said that she liked the sight of the road, because some one might be arriving that way. A little further on, under the rosemary, was the slab that marked the grave of the old collie, who

turned back resolutely in his last walk, and trotted home to the stable to die. The old house itself, how it spoke of vanished life, from the initials and date high on the gable, to the casemented windows through which how many desirous eyes had looked their last upon the sky. What chance have we, if we have lived in love and joy, to make anything of a world that thus falls in ruins about us, and where every house and field and high-standing hill is the memorial of something that can never be again! If we indeed manage to survive, to labour on, to keep our private hopes alive, is our only hope to wait until these sorrows become a fragrant sort of sentiment, just shading and heightening the sunlight of our happiness? What a pitiful solution! To shirk the onrush of sorrow, to be always courting oblivion, always counting our gains and gilding our mem-

ories. To turn life into a weak artistry, a thing of tones and values, a nosegay to delight the sense. Even if we toughly labour on, is it but to beguile the thoughts of beings as shortlived and evanescent as ourselves? Life lived on these terms cannot be a serious thing or a real thing; it becomes but a drive in a comfortable vehicle, through wind and rain, with the ever-present fear that we may at any time be called upon to alight and say farewell.

But when the knowledge of our immortality dawns upon us, how different become all these soft musings and broken echoes! How little then our hearts are set upon the pleasant garniture of life, and the riches which it then becomes almost a delight to resign! We can use life now as indifferently as the lover eats and drinks, as he journeys to the sight of his beloved. Our mind is fixed no longer on sweet

colours and sounds, because it knows that it is passing through them, and that they are but symbols of the fulness and unity that shall be. Those whom we love are no longer merely those with whom we use delight, and from whom we gather joy, but souls bound to us for ever by a stainless bond, which no lapse of time can hurt or break. And therefore we make haste to cast out of our life all sick and jarring elements, and to agree swiftly while we are in the way together.

The thought of sweet things that must fade is no longer a mere poignant sentiment, but a sign of renewal and freedom. Memories are no longer mere hopeless phantoms, but as the stones of the desolate place out of which the wayfarer piles his pillow. We do not lose the sense that things belong to us, but instead of their being things which we hoard for a little

and then reluctantly and pathetically resign, they are ours for ever. The felled tree, the dying flower, are but the signs of life borrowed from one place to be revived again elsewhere with the same endless ecstasy of life and vigour. The old days of kindness and regret, when we grasped at what seemed so solid, but lapsed like the snow-crystal while we held our breath, are no longer times to muse ruefully over and to forget if we can, but miry ways which led us, how blindly and dully, to the house of life itself; and instead of viewing pain and death as cruel gradations of decay, through which we fall into silence, we know them to be the last high steps of the ascent from which the view of life itself, with all its wide plains and woods, its homesteads and towns, will break upon our delighted eyes. And thus we come to feel differently about death and those who die;

we regard them half enviously, just sighing over the passing pang, the heavy terror of the last sharp strokes of pain—till even the thought of the woeful criminal himself, stumbling along the stone-flagged passage into the scene of his passion, becomes touched with reverence, as being the figure of one to whom some great and wonderful thing will presently be shown.

It may be said, "Can we live life on this level of hope and expectation?" No, we cannot all in a moment. But we can return again and again, in times of grief and pain, to contemplate the truth, and drink fresh draughts of comfort and healing. The one thing that we must determine is not to acquiesce in being entangled in the earthly things, that catch and wind, like the grasses and brambles of the brake, about our climbing feet. Not to make terms with mortal and material things, not

to abide in them, that is our business here and now. To take life as we find it, but never to forget that it is neither the end or the goal, that it is at once the problem and the solution. And yet we may thankfully accept and use all that is bright and clear, pure and beautiful, courageous and serene, because these things are the symbols of the life to which we are moving. And, on the other hand, sin and folly, pain and sorrow, are not to be disregarded, because they can give us a sense of proportion, and warn us not to drowse, like the heedless pilgrim, in the dangerous arbours by the road. We have to learn to believe in the permanence of nothing but life and joy, and to perceive that the only times when we are not advancing are the times when we linger morbidly in sadness, or childishly in satisfaction.

XI

AND now I desire, if I can, to go further still, outside of and behind life, though it can be little more than as if one ventured out in cloud and mist on to the crags of some vast mountain; one can but dimly guess at angle and extent, how the ridges lean together, where the snows begin.

And how, too, can one be perfectly candid in this matter? It is not only that one finds oneself at every moment conflicting with the traditions, the prepossessions, the very experiences of other souls; but one has one's own nurture, traditions, and prepossessions to bewilder one. Can one so far put all that away as to say what one believes, even to know what one believes? I do not here mean to deal with any in-

tellectual view of religion, any claim of dogma, and fact of revelation or evidence. In the darkness of mind through which I had to pass, one had to leave all that behind, to part from all institutions of society, all ordinances of man. One did not doubt their existence or their value to living and healthy men; but in that dark valley one is outside of them all, one is alone in the night—alone with what? That is the question; is there in that region any certainty at all, any life striving behind the mist, anything with which one can join hands?

There is a Power, of course! I never doubted of that. One realises that one is not self-created. Something, no matter by what name one calls it, has given life and consciousness to man, or has evolved him out of nothingness. One cares little about the process or the method. But one stands

there in misery and bewilderment, knowing that one is miserable and bewildered, able to conceive of oneself as happy and peaceful; and to me at least it is inconceivable to think of myself as owning all these qualities and perceptions, unless they were bestowed upon me by One that owned them too. There was a Power then outside oneself, and stronger than oneself, of which one was in some way the expression. Reason and intuition alike seemed to demand that. But when body, mind, and soul were all at strife, the question was what Power was the ultimate one. The Greeks, for instance, conceived of fate as behind the gods, as a force to which even the gods were subject. And therefore the gradations of power, if there were gradations, mattered little, for what I was in search of was the ultimate Power from which all that I was had filtered down. I seemed

then to discern Him very far off, and knew that I derived my being from Him; and looking back at the world's slow and dim history, I seemed to discern something more than that; an aim, an end in sight; a growth of justice and truth and love, in the direction of stability and happiness. I discerned more and more that men were not at ease, if they but safeguarded themselves in security and pleasure; that more and more their content was shadowed, if they saw others toiling and suffering, out of the sunshine of life; so that gradually humanity seemed desirous to make room inside the circle of light and warmth, that all might take their share; and I could feel no doubt in my own mind that the more that a man felt ill at ease at the thought of the unhappiness and darkness of others, the finer, better, higher he became. He could not always, it was true, convert others to this

039204

belief. There were still some, alas! whose own ease was made even more delicious by the thought that others were excluded; who felt the warmth of their own fireside more pleasant, because there were men shivering in the cold; while perhaps the noblest of all could even abjure their own ease, not rationally but impulsively, simply because they could not bear to have it if they could not also share it.

It was at this time that I met a man who showed me, without intending it, a great light. He was a man of singular nobility of thought, who took the most impersonal view of humanity I have ever encountered. His view was that the individual perished utterly, like a blown-out flame—but he maintained that for all that, one could rejoice in the thought of the world going on, of the great problem of life working itself out, humanity growing

in courage and disinterestedness and kindness, society shaping itself upon ever higher lines.

I could not share this view. I could feel with him that it was possible to be intensely interested in the progress of the world, so long as one was an integral part of it, but I could not feel any real interest in a thing from which I was to be ultimately wholly dissociated, any more than I could be really interested in what was going on, say, in the planet Mars. I might be interested, of course, speculatively and imaginatively. But I could not feel it was in any sense a vital concern of mine if my thought and action could not affect it in the slightest degree. "But," he said to me, "you are affecting the problem now by every deed you do and every word you say. Your mark upon the world is indelible, whatever happens to

you." "Undoubtedly," I said, "but I must be permanently concerned in it, before it can be anything but a mere tender and imaginative interest. If it is to be but as a book that I read, where nothing that I can do can affect the fortunes or the prospects of the characters depicted, it is nothing to me but a passing fancy."

But here that other conviction of which I have spoken came to my assistance. I was assured of the permanence of my soul; and though I could not conceive under what conditions I could enter hereafter, when I had passed the gate of death, into the corporate life of humanity, I felt that I should not and could not forfeit that privilege, that possession of individuality.

And then indeed I had a vision of infinite hope. The world, the awful, the mysterious life of man, would indeed continue ever schooling itself into new wisdom

and strength and beauty, and I should still assuredly bear my part. The flowers would still rise in their places, the woodlands break into leaf and song; among them would wander the men and women who should come after, with the same delicious wonder, the same sweet hopes and visions —and yet not the same, for they would year by year be less and less marred and clouded by the fears and sins that in the old days had clouded and marred our own peace and joy. I did not need to vex myself with any definite theories of reincarnation or new birth, but I knew that the life which I called mine was an indestructible thing, and must emerge again as life conscious of itself. I could conceive of no gathering or accumulation of passionless souls, bidden to rest in clouds of melody and light. I must continue, I must suffer, I must toil, I must love, over and over

again, till life itself was purified and made wholly good.

That then I saw was the inner meaning of the things so clumsily and tediously parcelled out here—faith and beauty, sacramental aspiration, prayer, self-sacrifice, worship. They were all the consciousness, symbolically expressed in phrase and colour, in ceremony and sound, of one gigantic energy drawing every kindred soul more and more into harmony with itself.

And that was God! A stupendous thought, stupendous from its mere simplicity; it had been staring me in the face all the time, and I had never suspected it. I had tried path after path, deserting each in turn, because they did not seem to lead me to a celestial city, on far-off hills, with amethystine foundations and gates of pearl. I was within the city all the time, and I knew it not. It was no place of melodious

ease and ordered ceremony. Its trumpets were the voice of labour, its smiles the joy of love, its incense-clouds the thrill of aspiring prayer. How could man ever have believed that the heaven of saints made perfect would have been anything but hell to them, if they could hear the groans of the world below, the droppings of its sad tears, and be condemned never to use their delicate hands or soil their dainty robes? Such a heaven would be but a paradise for refined and selfish sensualists. The very saints were doubtless serving still, the heroes still bearing themselves nobly, the lovers still thrilling with hope of union. There could be nothing withdrawn, nothing exclusive, in that kingdom.

And what then of the sin and evil that were here, the perversity, the shameful delays, the ugly hoardings, the hard indifferences that had darkened my days, and

would continue to darken them, for all my visions? They were here, a ghastly reality, too strong to be swept away even by the awful Will of God. And if He permitted them, could not I permit them, and all the more, if He gave me the desire to end them? If He did not make an end of them, must they not, in some way which I could not even dimly guess, be worth while? Was not the conquest somehow worth more than passionless inactive good? And were they not, most of them, but a sort of phantom, a grasping at joy misconceived and delight misunderstood? The sins of my own life, they had been all of them a desire to claim more than was my share of ease, an indifference to others' welfare. And was not the regenerating spirit of the world a desire to share one's good with others? Pride, power, lust, malice, cruelty, were all the claim for indi-

vidual comfort; and the new wise spirit of the world, that spirit which has grown up abundantly of late, was the spirit of just participation.

The soul and God! These were the things that my sorrow enabled me, however faintly, to discern. But the new knowledge, while it brought fresh sanctions, brought with it also fresh prohibitions. What must I do that was different from what I had done? I must welcome first and recognise any sign of the divine power, no matter in what distasteful forms of rite or creed it expressed itself, as long as it was clearly on the side of human justice and kindness. If it taught justice, and temperance, and affection, that was enough. Its symbols, its intellectual formulæ, were not my concern, so long as it was striving for spirit and clearness of vision as against matter and confusion of

thought. Next I must try, as far as in me lay, in whatever position I found myself, to induce others to look as clearly and as fairly as possible at the problems of life, to abandon personal tastes and preferences, and to see life steadily and finely. My work, it seemed, was to teach and write; and I must never encourage a prejudice or a frailty. I must make no excuses for myself, but I must not indulge in controversy or argument; I must persuade, if I could, but never coerce. I must aim at no position of influence, and clear myself of every wish to direct the lives of others, only taking care to live peaceably and laboriously. I must not seclude myself from the world, but take the obvious duty it offered me. I must try to be candid and not militant. I must grasp at nothing, plan nothing. I perceive all this only too clearly, but I do not say that I

can carry it out; but my failure must not discourage me, for not by this life only is my share in the upward movement of humanity bounded. Above all I must welcome every hint and offer of friendship and affection, that I may grow thus into a wider love; and the more souls that I can find to love, the more do I know that there are to love. I will worship humanity not in its weakness, but in its hope of strength.

And last of all I will let nothing in the world stand between my soul and God, neither laws, nor traditions, nor rites, nor doctrines. Whatever cramps, or clouds, or distorts the soul, I will abjure utterly. Here seems to me to lie the secret of the teaching of Christ, the law not of destruction but of fulfilment. Every religion that has ever been is an attempt to bring the soul and God together; and into every religion has crept a barrier of custom and

prejudice, of personal interests and material claims, that have insisted on allegiance. I have done, I hope, with all that. I do not expect to escape pain and sorrow: there are shadows on the pathway that lies ahead. I cannot pierce the gloom, but there is light above, behind, beyond. I can say with the Psalmist, "I see that all things come to an end; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

XII

It was like a new beginning of life, and for the first time I knew what the old dry word regeneration could mean. Life seemed to be quietly handed back to me, simplified, straightened out, renewed. It was as though the Giver of Life had resumed His gift for a while, that it might be recast, remoulded, reinvigorated; and then restored it to me, as if saying with a smile, "There is the great gift which you have misunderstood, misused, strained, tangled, almost broken; it has been put straight for you, in those dark hours; try now to use it better!" The joy of that new gift flowed into every corner of my mind and soul, and illuminated it all as with the light of the rainbow that is round about the Throne;

it had the fresh, the divine quality about it again.

That light shone clearly upon that strange complex thing which I had called my religion, a strange mixture of tradition, association, knowledge, opinion, rite, ceremony, artistic emotion. That had all to be reconsidered and simplified, if possible.

I read the Gospel afresh, almost as a new book, and a mist seemed to clear away from my eyes. There were many things in it which were obscure, many things which were not so much incredible, as needing an attestation and a confirmation which it was impossible they could obtain. But the mistake which one had made had been, I now saw, to take it rather as though it had been an autobiography of the Saviour, when it was really a dim record made by very simple and ignorant people, whose minds were all coloured and warped by the prejudices, the

traditions, the current beliefs and opinions of their time. They had seen in the Saviour's life the things they had expected and desired to see. But now I suddenly discerned Christ through the Gospel rather than in the Gospel. There was that Divine, stainless, noble figure behind it all, misunderstood, misinterpreted, misconceived. It loomed out suddenly as a great snow peak beyond the broken ridges. It was made all the more majestic, all the more impossibly beautiful by the crudity of the record, the cloudy texture of overlaid belief; while the whole vast fabric of ecclesiastical policy and scientific definition, built up, court after court, wall after wall, here a tower, there a hall, round the little bare central shrine, seemed to collapse before my gaze.

The secret of Christ—it was not a thing to be apprehended historically or doctrinally or authoritatively; it was as though

in a great palace, where one had resorted in awe and bewilderment, crowded with busy, stately, severe, preoccupied persons, the Lord of the place came suddenly forward, simply habited, with a smile and an outstretched hand. It mattered not what men had made of Him, how they had used His name to serve their ends; the spirit had been strongest in those dim days of the faith when it had spread secretly from heart to heart; but I saw all at once He had been there, that He had lived and died, spoken and thought. The sense of an absolutely real human presence, a Brother indeed, with matchless insight, perfect wisdom, infinite affection, endless sympathy, flashed across me.

What was the life that He would have us live, what was the spirit we were to nurture in our hearts? An unquestioning affection, an unfailing kindness, a simple

confidence in the Father, and his high and joyful intention towards man. That first; and from that was to flow an instant sacrifice of all ambition, all desire, all claim. We were to scheme for nothing, call nothing our own, give freely and generously, forgive everything, despair of no one, live joyfully and simply where we found ourselves placed, not regret the past, not plan the future. We were to conquer material things by disregarding them, not concern ourselves with the aims and policies of the world, not indulge spite or anger or malice, take for granted the goodwill and brotherliness of men. It was not that men were to strive and cry and testify, to indulge in picturesque abnegations or conspicuous asceticism. It was a temper, an attitude, an atmosphere of thought that was commanded —a mood that a man might practise in a court, in a house of business, in a profes-

sion, as a clerk, as a labourer, as an artisan. It did not mean a breaking of ties, a sacrifice of human engagements, a loud proclamation of insistent duties. One was to have leisure to love things pure and beautiful, to be kind and good, patient and serene. It was to be an inward happiness, which was to flow out to all one's circle. The one thing to fear and dread was harsh, censorious, grim respectability. Life was to be a smiling, joyful, leisurely, kindly thing, not grave or preoccupied or sorrowful. Grief, pain, loss, disappointment, anxiety, were to be met in the same untroubled spirit, as things which would come to an end, and yet had each a gift to offer. The native air of the spirit was to be a calm and living joy, meeting all with the same eager interest and sympathy, not expecting all to be perfect, and yet amused rather than vexed at their imperfections.

The failure was to form habits, prejudices, critical perceptions, even principles. Those were the things that narrowed the soul. One was to regard even sin as a sign that the sinner had not perceived where happiness lay, was grasping at something feverish, greedy, unsatisfying, and must learn the truth by delay and weariness.

But the force and beauty of the message lay in this—that it did not require a long apprenticeship, an intricate initiation. The moment one perceived it, one could begin to practise it, and every least experiment showed the peace that might ensue. It all lay in the freshness and eagerness of the untrammelled life, the discovery, so simple but yet so sure, that one gained instantaneously by any sacrifice of material things or selfish desires; that so far from the abandonment of a desire or an ambition

being a pain, it brought with it a sense of freedom and lightness, and gave the soul more time for its own quiet joy.

What tortured moralities, what scrupulous agonies, what ugly fears and miseries have been made out of this sweet and simple message of joy and peace! That is the saddest part of the history of the faith, that men, instead of perceiving its essence, have tried to read their own complex, harsh, hostile, combative temperaments into it; have been so bewildered by its sweetness and gentleness and childlike joy, that they have mistrusted and distorted it, and feared to take up so light a burden, because they did not dare to believe that the Father meant them so well. Thus they have multiplied fears and restrictions and duties and anxieties to please Him, when they were intended to cast them all aside.

I know well that it is possible to pluck

a handful of fiery darts out of the Gospel itself to confute this view. But I feel so certain of the real drift and purpose of the secret of Christ, that I am content to disregard all this. Christ did not speak of life as a place of anxious fear and dreary drudgery, but as a place that might be full of hope and content and joy.

Now to perceive this is not at once to practise it; and I say plainly that my own life contradicts my faith in many respects. One cannot, soaked as one is by habits, faults, fears, desires, rise into perfect joy. But I am in no doubt whatever of the truth; and if one desires to be different, one becomes different. I have, however feebly, lived, since I saw the light, in a different frame of mind; I have tried to be peaceful, quiet, forbearing; I have tried to meet all men and women as brothers and sisters indeed in the great family of God;

I have tried to give rather than to hoard; I have tried to speak peace and to practise it. I am in no doubt whatever of the loving intention of the Father to me, His very frail and wilful child. Sin and doubt and fear very often overcome me, and I know how little reason I give to others to be recognised as a Christian; but I do recognise Christ as my Lord and Master, and would keep His will, if I could; and though I go astray like a sheep that is lost, I do indeed know that my Shepherd follows me and seeks me; I discern Him moving towards the dawn; His hand guides me, puts aside the thorny branches through which I could not press, leads me beside the waters of comfort. I can dare to be joyful beneath His eye. I do not know what the end will be, or what eager energy of life lies beyond the dark river; but I am redeemed and fed, and shall some day be satisfied!

XIII

YET, however clearly one may discern the law of beautiful life, we cannot overlook the dark background from which it emerges, in all its pure and crystalline radiance.

The real insuperable difficulty lies here —that we are cast, all of us, in so intensely personal moulds, and then dealt with so impersonally. Suffering and disaster fly about among the helpless crowd, striking down a victim here and there, like some great ugly exploding bomb, horribly indifferent to the temperament and capacity of those who are wounded. No effort of the imagination can make us believe, unless indeed we wilfully close our eyes to half the facts, that troubles come to us like the subtle and timely arrows of

some heavenly marksman. Some strong brutal selfish character elbows his way through life, dealing misery as he goes, alike to those who withstand him and to those whom he deigns to desire, without a single pang to mar his serenity; or a complication of tragic woes falls on the head of some frail, innocent, well-meaning creature, whose only fault is guilelessness. Or the misery does not fall when it is needed, when it might have warned and saved, but long after, in crushing violence, when no amendment is possible. And then, too, there is implanted in us a strong sense of justice and injustice, which seems to be made after some heavenly pattern; and this is thwarted and belied and contradicted by the harsh tyrannies of fate. Happy is the man who can say truly and sincerely with all his heart, "Great is Thy mercy, O Lord, and just are Thy judgments!" Not less

strong within us is the sense of how we should deal with character, to guard, and purify, and strengthen it. Think of the anxious care of a tender father, how to bring up his boys in purity and manliness. How he schemes for them, to warn neither too much nor too little, to give his children confidence in himself, to encourage them to trust him, to win them to the side of wholesome, beautiful, and manly influences! And then perhaps he has the pain of seeing his care and love thwarted by some coarse seduction, some careless companionship, some chance association. The best consolation we can apply is that care and love and influence work out well on the average; but that is just where an infinite goodness and love ought not to break down; it ought not to have a fringe of waste and mire, if it is all-powerful and all-regarding. A finite creature might thus fail because of

his limitations, might be distressed at being unable to carry out his design in perfection. But the infinite power above us seems to fail even more helplessly and more ruthlessly. Neither is it as though that power always worked on the side of joy against sorrow. Some of the worst things in life happen to us through our delight, and some of the best things come from our pains; and again there are joys that ennoble and sorrows that discourage. There comes the Gospel message that tells us that the mourner and the beggar are blest, and speaks of a God ready instantly to welcome the repentant sinner and to restore him. And when we joyfully and ardently believe it, experience touches us on the shoulder, and shows us that it is not so, that the man whom God seems to favour is the self-controlled, prudent, strong, and cautious man, who cannot be wounded through his

affections, because his heart is cold, or through his hopes, because he has none, or through his aspirations, because they are to him mere schemes for comfort. This is the man who lives life easily and cheerfully, and often faces death resolutely and with courage; while the ardent, the sensitive, the highly-strung, who are athirst for all that is beautiful and radiant and sweet, are the prey of a hundred disappointments and disillusionments and sorrows; and even for these God has some love, for He sends them their time of joy. But worst of all is the case of the meek and the stupid, the weak and the unbalanced, the dull and the uninteresting; on these frail creatures of His hand neither God or man has any mercy; they are the prey of their weakness, and no one pities them; men are relieved or indifferent when they die; they are pushed from the banquet of life, they are made to

serve and drudge, and they are consumed by bitterness and dreariness. Yet here and there, in every rank and class, up and down the line, one sees a few entirely sweet and simple souls, with no thought of themselves, no personal aspirations, who go day by day through life with perfect sincerity and content, radiating love and serenity, wholly quiet and true, with no struggles against evil, no thwarting obstacles, with neither ambitions nor discontents, claiming to receive nothing, desiring only to give and serve. Yet no one can resemble them by taking thought; their secret is incommunicable, and they are aware of no strife or strain. There seems no reason why these should be few, and yet they are few. And what is perhaps the strangest thought of all is, that what seem the highest souls of all, souls thrilled by every hint of beauty and filled at the outset of life with every

kind of inner delight, anxious to be taught, greedy of perfection, are yet so strangely blind, mistaking the things that are truly and deeply beautiful, and turning aside after charm and attractiveness. Such as these, when they have some high and noble task set them, some patient self-sacrifice, some humble service, can only see it in a dreary and dull aspect, full of intolerable tedium and sickening monotony; and not till the opportunity is over, till the broken soul they might have healed dies uncomforted, till the weary life they might have gladdened is spent, do they see that it would have been a great and noble deed; and thus they pass through life, unable to discern the inner beauty of what meets them, and pierced with unavailing regret when it has passed by.

And in all this strange confusion of thought and impulse of mood and tempera-

ment, we are set to find God and right and beauty, if we can; and after perverse mistakes and heart-breaking errors, and low temptations, and miserable failures, we begin to doubt if the Shepherd has really any care for his lost sheep, whether he only cares for those who are docile and obedient, loving pasture and provender and the security of the fold.

Yet all this too could be amended if we had a sure and certain hope that life and temperament were immortal, and that in some freer world of spirit, all could be redressed and comforted, our wounds bound up, our failing strength repaired; but of that we are in utter ignorance; even if we have the conviction of it, we cannot give that conviction to another. And there are times when we lay to rest the silent form of one who has been worsted in the battle, who has suffered dishonour and disgrace and

woe, who has drunk deep of evil joys and evil pains, when we feel that if this life is all, it is a ghastly and a cruel business, and hate the smiling sun, the fluttering leaf, the song of the bird in the churchyard thicket, because it all seems a heartless mockery. Then, if some secret voice could tell us, indubitably and serenely, that all will yet be duly apportioned, we feel that we could bear anything and wait for ever; but we are left in our blindness, our hands stretched out, the sweet wind in our face, wishing we could sleep like the pebble in the sun, passionless as the warm ray, untroubled as the quiet lake.

Yet it may be! and deep in the heart, behind all misery of failure, all extremity of regret, deep as the fathomless sea, remote as the hidden star, there does rest the faith that we are made for harmony and peace and joy, and that we must earn them

by dumb patience and bitter suffering, by sickening distrust and dreary loneliness. It is there, that last blest hope; and just because it is the last and deepest thought, the thought that remains when all else is emptied out of us, all desire and regret, all love and sorrow, all pride and despair, it must at last prevail. We cannot anticipate it, we cannot delay it. Every avenue of life, every grim and labyrinthine passage of woe, leads out upon that paradise of God. For the soul returns to love and peace as its natural inheritance, and folds its wing at last in the tree of life that is in the midst of that hidden garden.

And therefore I BELIEVE, and call upon all to believe, that each single incident or experience, small or great, whether it be innocent joy and brave enterprise, whether it be sad patience or dreary endurance, whether it be sin or shame, weaves and re-

solves itself, at last, into the heavenly harmony; and that there is awaiting us a joy in which even our most abject failures, our ugliest transgressions, will bear their part, a joy indeed which could not be perfect without them; and that our nearness to the goal of our desire is shown not by our complacency and our satisfaction, our success and our pride, but by our shame and regret for all that has been amiss, our humility, our mistrust, our conscious weakness. Even in this life we may pass a stage beyond that, into a trained submission, a wise tranquillity; but we must, like the Lord of Life, at some time or another have descended into hell. The ascent cannot begin midway, it must be from the bottom. And to begin the climb, we must have had a moment of utter abandonment and despair, when all the waves and streams of God pass over us, and when we seem to

have nothing we can call our own but a timid, naked, worthless, helpless soul. To some that comes swiftly enough; to others, whose pride of heart and intellect is strong, only after long struggle and inglorious defeat. For the essence of it is its ignominy and its disgrace; as long as one can persuade oneself that it has anything romantic about it, that it is a kind of picturesque ruin, so long the mind is but holding up a desperate shield against the truth. The shield once lowered, the naked horror once confessed, the total and entire defeat once realised, some advance is possible, if one sets oneself humbly and patiently to tread the narrow and intricate path out of one's disasters. The one inseparable and inextricable thing is self; we cannot escape from that; it is the one inalienable possession that we have, and from which we cannot be parted; and if it is true that it is

this self which has wrought all the disaster, and sits shuddering in the wreck, it is equally true that only through the same self can one escape. It must be recast, remoulded, made anew. It is useless to lose time in asking why it was allowed to be so perverse, so ineffectual. The failure is there.

XIV

If we believe in the Father and His good purpose towards us, what we require of affliction and of suffering, what we have a right to require, is this, that it should be felt to be helping us and purifying us. God gives us a natural sense of justice, implanting it deep in our hearts; and it is through this sense of justice that all the best victories of humanity have been won; though the gradual recognition that others have rights as well as we, and that their rights must not be sacrificed to our convenience and pleasure, because we have the power to sacrifice them, has been slow indeed. If then this sense of justice is the highest thing within us, the thing which most differentiates us from the beast—and we can-

not doubt it—we have a right to protest boldly, if it shall seem to be violated. Of course we must be quite clear that what we claim for ourselves *is* just, and that our sense of justice does not merely demand that we should have exactly what we prefer, or that if we offend, we shall be excused the consequences. We must be perfectly candid about this with ourselves, or the whole consideration is in vain. If we have perversely indulged some fault of sensuality, or temper, or wilfulness, or levity, knowing that it was a fault, and trusting vaguely in the good-nature of God not to be hard on it, then we have earned our punishment, and it is not for us to decide what that punishment may be.

I was talking the other day to a friend about the life of a very wise and faithful priest, who had had to bear long and grievous affliction, which left him in utter dark-

ness of mind, and suspended the work he was doing in the world. I said to my friend, "Tell me this. Did he trace any benefit to himself from what he suffered? Did he feel that it had effected anything for his spirit?" "No," said my friend, very gravely, "he did not. He was not concerned with that. He looked upon it as a chastisement for his sin."

To the thoughts of those who knew best the man of whom I am speaking, it seemed as though there was no sin apparent in his nature, and that the suffering he endured was but the strain of his physical forces resulting from an eager sense of responsibility and an overpowering desire to help others in their troubles. But it was a fine answer, if it meant, as I think it meant, that the sufferer did not rebel, but acquiesced with all his will in what he endured.

The Father cannot have it in His heart that we should merely be crushed and silenced by our punishment; that we should submit, simply because there is no way out, as a little bird submits to be torn by a hawk. If our submission is like that, it is worth nothing; it only plunges our spirit in deeper darkness. If I thought thus of the Father of men, that He was merely a tyrant who, because He was angry or cruel, struck at any creature near Him, and was amused to see it writhe and suffer, then I should indeed despair; my life would then be lived on lines of craven fear, just hoping, if I could, not to offend, and perhaps to escape notice. But I do not believe that. I believe that if I do not escape notice, and if I am plunged in affliction, it is affliction which is designed to meet my case, and to bring me joy in the days to come.

Of course we must not be in a hurry to decide whether punishment is just or unjust. If our plans are thwarted, if we lie in anguish of body or soul, if we see another dear to us in pain and misery and cannot help him, we must not at once cry out that it is all unjust and cruel. We live in space and time, and there must be a sowing and a growth before the harvest. But if when the suffering is over, and on looking back at it we see that it did indeed minister to strength and hope and purity, then we may feel, not joyfully perhaps, or even gratefully, but still with our will and our reason, that this present terrible trial, which seems so hopeless and so utterly without promise of good, may yet be rich in hope and comfort.

> "It would not steel the aching will
> To courage, were it sweet to bear."

And further, we must surely most of us

realise that we have in our natures something that needs to be broken, sternly, and unconditionally. I do not know how it may be with others, but I recognise in myself something terribly stubborn, perverse, and complacent, something which gluts itself greedily on praise and success, as a beast that growls and glares over its food, and is wholly absorbed in its own ugly satisfaction. I recognise in myself a mean desire to attain rather than to deserve, a foolish vanity of mind, a perverse indolence, a timid shrinking from anything hard or disagreeable, an eager desire for sensuous delight. I know that I am unloving, disloyal, untender, inconsiderate, and regard my own convenience far more than I regard the welfare of others. Moreover, I recognise in myself a most peevish impatience, a light-minded dislike of all hindrances and obstacles to my desires and

designs, a claim that my hurried and ill-considered work should at once bear rich fruit, an extreme intolerance of any opinion but my own.

I make some fitful attempts to combat these qualities, but they are woefully strong, and have a way of showing their heads even when I believe them to be eradicated.

All this must, I sorrowfully see, be broken down before I can make progress. I did not indeed, as far as I know, choose these weaknesses and failings, but they are there, and no peace of mind is possible while they are there.

And thus I seem to discern that I must somehow make an unconditional surrender, and that no real betterment is possible till these evil weeds are extirpated.

In the sad days of which I have spoken, it seemed to me, not once or twice, but

day by day, that I was utterly at bay. I did, no doubt, exaggerate my evil case, for the misery of such experience is that all the hopeful and joyful elements of life are sucked away. But it did at least leave me sincerely and candidly face to face with my own spirit; and I was forced to gaze at myself in the mirror of truth, to see the haggard lines of evil, the deep wrinkles of self-will, the havoc which light-mindedness and insincerity and timidity had made upon my inner countenance. In the absence of all comforting complacency, all hopes for the future, all joy in the present, all triumph in the past, I was forced to see with a shocking clearness what I had done to my soul.

XV

Now let me turn away from my little own experience to the experience of two great lives of the last century, Ruskin and Carlyle. It so happens that by the profuse publication of the most intimate and private documents, we have a wonderfully minute and inspiring record of the lives and sufferings of these two great spirits.

Ruskin was a man who all his life spoke about himself and his emotions with a candour for which we may feel wholly grateful, even if we do not entirely admire it. He had most of the things which we account blessings showered lavishly upon him. He had great wealth, a marvellous joy of perception, an extreme love of beautiful things, high ability and industry, early

and abundant fame, and a wide power of attracting and impressing men and women. But for all this his life was one of the most constantly and consciously unhappy, after his youth was left behind, which it is possible to find. His social theories were derided, his schemes were despised, his affections sharply criticised. He had many times over the intense humiliation of having to descend into the dreadful shadowland of insanity. His style was praised by critics who made bitter fun of his suggestions. He felt himself a failure when his fame was widespread and secure. He could not gain the love of the one woman he desired to win; and the load of sorrow that he had to bear was written plainly on his drawn face and haggard eyes.

But yet one feels all through that the man grew nobler every year through his torment; and indeed that his real nobility

of spirit never appeared at all until his sorrows fell upon him. We must not be deluded by the glamour of his fame into thinking that we could bear the same pain if it were only counterbalanced by the same renown, because his fame was nothing to him, if he was even aware of it. And one does feel on closing the great record, that he did at last gain something through his reluctant and grievous submission, which sets him among the high spirits of the earth in a way which all his natural gifts could never have sufficed to do. He had the seal of greatness in the power of tormenting himself even to madness about the ills of others, which he tried in vain to remedy; and the real crucifixion of spirit which he endured came to him through his powerlessness to set things straight in his own way and at his own pace.

And then consider Carlyle, a far stronger

and grimmer nature, who did not, as Ruskin did, desire that men should be drawn by the exquisite beauty of nature and art, and by the gracious ordering of life, into a reasonable and ardent peace of spirit. Carlyle had the instincts of the peasant and the Puritan. He loved fighting as Ruskin loved lecturing. He too desired that men should instantly conform to his idea of sturdy labour and incisive speech, and if they would not, let them be taught, like the men of Succoth, with thorns and briars and resounding blows. There was room, no doubt, for both of these gospels—the gospel of beauty and the gospel of strength. But Carlyle had to learn, by miserable health, and by the anguish of remorse for having gone far, out of mere thoughtless selfishness, to break one of the most loving hearts in the world, that he could not have his own way or work his own will.

He too had to make his submission, and he made it gallantly and humbly, in sorrow and tears.

But it may be said that these two men were giants of intellect and perception, and that the case is far different for those who, in dull routine and undistinguished dreariness, have to submit, without the distraction at least of knowing that they are acting a big part on the stage of the world. But it is not so; it may be a stimulus to act decorously, if one knows that many eyes are upon one; but for most men the sense of publicity, when their hour of suffering comes, is simply nothing more than an added woe. They feel that they could just bear it if they could withdraw into some secret and solitary place and suffer alone. But their life is knit up with so many other lives, that sympathy and inquiry pour in upon them when their vital force seems

only just equal to the task of endurance; and behind that is the peering and inquisitive world, blowing its bubbles of gossip, exaggerating, chuckling, distorting, misapprehending. Even the most secret suffering of the great must be telegraphed from shore to shore.

But—for these things must be fairly and courageously faced—what can be said of and to those spirits who, on looking back at past suffering, are merely bewildered and dismayed by it, and can trace in it nothing but cruelty and waste? They cannot see where or why the sad tangle began; they only know that the lights went out one by one, that evil came in like a creeping tide, and that in their dreary respites they only fell helplessly back upon the old stratagems and the diminishing enjoyments, to distract themselves, by any means in their power, from the hideous vacuity of life. What can

be said of the dreadful stories revealed at inquests, or whispered in the ears of priests and physicians, when the glimmering flame of tortured life flickers and fades? Such suffering is bearable if there is a visible sequel of peace and energy; but if there is not, if death comes as a mere relief, as a door closed upon a hopeless tragedy, what is one to make of that? Then one can but fall back upon the inalienable residue of hope, which even reason with all its apparatus cannot extinguish. We can assure ourselves, by the fact that qualities awake and develop, even in children, which cannot be the result of any experience, but must signify some previous life-history, some previous chapter of soul-events, we can assure ourselves, I say, that there *is* a sequel, even though we cannot see it. That a life is but as a day with its opening and closing light, in a long sequence of days.

To say that it is not so, is as if a child were to persist, in the fading of the twilight colours, that it had looked its last upon the sun. Every faculty that we have, reason, hope, love, faith, tells us that there is a further dawn for the failing spirit, when the poor body sinks into ruin; and are our feeble sense-perceptions so mighty that they are to contradict all those larger and deeper faculties? Is it not strange that while we cannot conceive of any beginning or ending of matter, of any process which should bring a new atom into existence, or make any atom cease to be, we should yet speak and think as though the soul should cease to be? The tombstone no more announces the end of the spirit than it announces the destruction of the mortal body. The tombstone marks but the beginning and the end of a chapter of life; and while it mournfully announces

the birth and death of a human being, the mortal frame of that human being is passing on among a thousand other forms, and the spirit is alive, shared perhaps among a thousand other spirits, but still inevitably there.

XVI

IT is in happiness that our true life lies—I do not think that any one can continue long in sorrow without perceiving that—in sorrow we but endure, waiting to live again. For weeks together I was not conscious of life at all, only of something suspended and overclouded, with the grievous necessity upon me of pretending to be alive, waking from sleep, rising, hanging my clothes upon me, stepping out into the world, stumbling on with my burden. But I never for an instant mistook it for life. The most that one could hope was that it might be doing something for one, moulding, disciplining, changing the quality of one's joy.

I never had any great taste for what is

called pleasure; excitement, movement, competition in any form had always been a troubling of the serene and easy monotony in which I like best to dwell; and I doubt if true life ever resides very much in the excitement of life. One may grow to need excitement, to depend upon it, as one depends by habit upon any other sort of stimulus; but an urgent love of excitement is always the result of a certain fear of being alone with oneself, the fear of the clouded, restless, jaded mood, which is one of the shadows of the body, and does not belong to the inner mind at all. The happiest times of life are the times when one has had congenial claims of duty, work, and love to satisfy, and when one has never paused, as the full and eager days sped along, to wonder whether one is happy or to wish things different. How often has one seen the vague restlessness of youth,

the discontent, the sense of pottering along with an education which did not seem to be feeding the heart and mind, or leading anywhere in particular, disappear, instantaneously and simply, in a healthy sort of objectivity, at the touch of real work and worldly business. In education itself, how foolishly we talk and think as if it were a rigid process to which all must be subjected, an acquisition of definite information, while we pass by and overlook the educative value of life-work. Education as we administer it, is often a mere prolongation of an artificial immaturity. I have known many young men, whose judgment has remained childish and capricious, whose sense of proportion has been grotesque, whose only serious thoughts have been given to athletic ambitions, suddenly flower into sense and fairness and sympathy in a year of real work, of real contact with the

world. One does not want to hurl the young into premature anxieties, but happiness is only to be found in experience, in real relations with others, in learning when to submit our own fancies to social welfare, in compromise, in sacrifice; much of that of course enters into the strangely artificial life of our schools and colleges; but I think we are much to blame in nurturing for the sake of convenience so unreal a standard of values, in making so much of bodily prowess and mental dexterity, in taking so little notice of quiet unselfish sturdy virtues, unless they are accompanied by some degree of accomplishment and performance. I am sure that I suffered very much from leading a life which, until the date when I left the University, was little more than a pleasant and sentimental dream. It seems to me now that instead of having been shown the

duty of co-operation with others, I was stirred and encouraged only to the feeblest sort of self-effectuation; to earn one's pleasure by complying with the demands of work was the highest ideal that was ever held up to us. The goal of personal distinction was what we all aimed at, and what we were advised to aim at. But I do not believe that happiness is ever attained on those lines at all. The reward of labour is not the crown and the prize, but life itself. But one was taught to disregard the homely tracts of life as far as possible, and to fix one's heart upon some triumph, the realisation of some ambition, and when it was gained, the thirsty soul propounded to itself another draught of success, at which it had to clutch in turn. But the happiness at which we ought to aim is not the happiness of the triumphant moment, because it is not the best part of the mind

which desires success. The idea that the successful boy was ever to feel a moment's sympathy with his disappointed rivals would have been swept away as priggish and affected. Part of the joy was that he had won what all desired, and what only one could win. And I now firmly believe that competition, which was the one supreme motive force in my own education from first to last, is a thing which ought to be minimised and neglected as far as possible. Happiness ought to be shown to consist in living life to the full, in the interchange of labour and rest, in the use of every faculty that we call our own. "Ah," says the cautious sophist, "that is all very well! But it ends in a mere mass of dilettante tastes; a resolute self-limitation is the only condition of success." I grant it. But it has yet to be proved that success is the end to aim at. The truth is that there are

two tendencies now struggling together in the heart of man; one is the old Homeric conception of the hero and the herd. The herd are to be the patient audience, the astonished negligible gazers at the feats of the mighty. Step from the herd if you can; coerce, frighten, dazzle, command! or else hold your peace and be content to admire! But the rising tendency is very different; it is to let the hero alone to exult in his strength; but to give every opportunity, every encouragement possible to the weak and frail and dull; to give energy and hope to all; to see that each has due experience, and a chance of living life fully and freely.

I think that one of the chief miseries I had to endure, when my energies ran low and my brain was blighted by illness, was that, brought up as I had been with a false conception of happiness, a neglect of life

itself in favour of success, I lost for a time all interest in living on. Life seemed futile without an object in view, without a performance to enact, without a triumph in sight. I had been taught to sweep away all labour, all effort, when it was over, as the dust and chips of the workshop. I had never learned to keep my eye firmly and seriously on life itself as it passed. It was all work with an end, or pleasure earned, or justified idleness. To the question "what are you doing?" one was expected to reply, "I have this in view, I have that book on the stocks, I am thinking of standing for that post." To have said "I am living," would have seemed perverse or affected.

And thus it is that we many of us miss the meaning of life, and therewith happiness as well. The necessity is to have occupations, recreations, relations with others. It may have been only the result of my own

blindness and carelessness, but I do not ever remember that it was brought firmly before me by talk or by sermon, that one's relations with others were important things at all. One must be obedient, one must avoid bad company, because it was hurtful to one's career. The publican and the sinner were disreputable people, to associate with whom endangered one's health and one's income. I have no doubt that it was said to us in sermons that one must do one's duty, without thinking of the reward. But while at the same time every one's place in every examination was printed, while prizes were rained down upon the successful scholar, while every sort of deference was conceded to the prominent athlete, life was a perpetual contradiction of those mild warnings. I do not think I was ever told that life was given me to be interested in, that affections

were to be carefully tended, that courtesy, kindness, good-humour, unselfishness, were possessions a thousand times more delightful than a prize or a cap, that work was a thing to be enjoyed like running or swimming, that the power of mastering an uninteresting thing was even better than the power of mastering an interesting thing, and that life itself, every hour, every moment, was or could be wonderful, interesting, active, delightful. I never thought of my school or my college as of a community enjoying together a full and eager experience, or that one must give all that one could, share everything, enact one's full part. I rather thought of them as places where one got all one could, made a little bodyguard of friends, kept tiresome people at a distance, outpaced them, impressed them. When one went home, one put the whole thing out of one's head, never thought

of one's friends or one's activities, just got all the pleasure one could out of the domestic circle. I do not think that this was a deliberate selfishness—it was rather how one had instinctively learned to treat life.

There is no danger that boys and young men will ever think too much of the social duty of sharing; but I am sure that all the guidance and direction they get ought to be in that direction, and not in the direction of teaching them to take and keep what they can. Above all they should be encouraged to face the mystery of life, the wonder of it, the fulness of it, bravely and hopefully; to think of it as a splendid gift and opportunity, to be used generously and sweetly, not as a great heap of convenient things from which one must filch as many tit-bits as one can. There is a homely old story, where the kindly mother at the table says to her greedy little boy

who is helping himself to more of a tart, "Don't take any more of that, Tom! Don't you see that the servants will want to have some?"

When I fell into my own trouble, the bitterness of it lay there—that there seemed to be nothing more to be got from life. I could not see that I ought to have perceived that I was still living and experiencing. I turned helplessly to my friends, and found it disagreeable to feel dependent on them. I felt that I had nothing to give them, as though forsooth that were the basis of affection, and I could not be content to enjoy their goodness and sympathy! Still less could I see then, as I can see now, that the hopeless endurance, the having to struggle on, clouded and abject, was one of the finest experiences that had ever befallen me. If I had had a larger and more generous view of the worth of experience I

might have endured with more courage and patience, even with more interest in what was happening.

But though, as I have said, I do not doubt that our real life lies in happiness, in serene activity, in giving rather than receiving, and though one must never mistake suffering for life or sorrow for the ultimate reality, yet I am sure that we do not regard life itself enough; we waste time in retrospect and prospect. The past is nothing, except as it leaves us to-day; the future is what it will be; and the essence of life is to live as the motto says, *in dies ad diem,* day by day, until the day shall come—the day of larger hope, of stronger experience, of fuller life.

XVII

How wearisome books of travel generally are to read! The descriptions of places do not give one the least idea of the scene or the details; it is all a confused mass of impressions, like an old rubbish-heap. The simplest sketch, half-a-dozen pencil strokes, will often give one a better idea of a place than pages of description; it is difficult to see why words should be so vague, so incapable of precise delineation. What an intensely definite thing, for instance, a human face is! One sees faces which photograph themselves instantaneously upon the memory, and yet what an utterly impossible task to describe a face in such a way that any one reading the descrip-

tion can form any notion of what it is like.

The reason why books of travel are so unsatisfactory is, I suppose, that prosaic people go to fine places, and feel themselves so much stirred and uplifted by the novelty and beauty of what they have seen, that they are compelled to relate the experiences, because they seem to them so unusual a kind of poetry, like an inspiriting march to the sound of unseen music.

Yet if the right person writes a book of travel, what a glow and brightness it all has; it is not that the descriptions reproduce the scenes, but they force one to form pictures of one's own; in the hands of genius, the very food consumed, the trivial talk of the persons encountered, all has a value of its own. It is all symbolic and mysterious, the food a sacrament rich with

the unseen, the words of strangers prophetic and suggestive, like the speech of angels, opening up views and vistas of life, giving news of the eternal country to which we all belong.

And so one comes to realise how little the subjects of books matter after all. The subject is merely the peg on which the picture hangs, and what one draws near to and recognises is the breath of life, the contact of some other human soul. That, after all, is what lies behind all furniture and houses and cultivated fields and gardens—the human thought that went to the making and the using of them; and what lies behind flowers and trees, mountains and plains, stars and sunsets, is the mind of God Himself. One does not know what it is, but a mind has been at work, something has designed and made them, has taken pleasure in them, something akin to ourselves, with

ideas of what is amusing, and beautiful, and strange, and terrifying. It is the sense of friendliness and sympathy and companionship that one desires, the knowledge of something awake and working and planning, and even, who knows, loving.

One of the worst pains I had to bear was when the sense of all this companionship faded from me; when all seemed mechanical and dull, just existing and moving from a sort of habit, without intelligence, or life, or joy. I knew that it was a deception, and that the life was there, but I could not come near it or take any part in it. And then I saw that one of my many mistakes had been to find myself self-sufficient. I saw that I had accepted all this companionship of spirits as just the theatre of my own designs, to be reckoned with and dealt with only so far as they helped and hindered my own satisfaction and enterprise.

The mistake, the loss, was not to have sought this fellowship for itself, not to have tried to be one with it, to draw near to it, to embrace it, to rest lovingly with it and in it. Had it been trying to make itself known, to win me all the time? I thought that it had. But all the hands held out, the smiles, the offered caresses, the words of love, I had taken them all as incidents of the drama, not as the very secret of life itself. And even so, even if now I realised my loss, my sterility, my hardness, how could I begin afresh and take the sweet power into my soul? That I could not tell. And so when I found that, as the dreary days went on, some of those whom I had held to be my friends were dumb in my presence, or withdrew themselves from me, or made no sign of sympathy and love, I could not find it in my heart to blame them for an instant, but

I was all the more deeply and tenderly grateful to the few who came closer to me. It was strange to find that they were not always those of whom I should have expected such patient affection, such faithful loyalty. Some, of whose help and sympathy I felt secure, had not a word for me; some, whom I had credited only with a sense of cheerful congeniality, came to my aid again and again, sought my company, bore with my melancholy blankness, unobtrusively and sweetly helped me to bear my burden. They very people whom I could have imagined excusing themselves by thinking that they were sensitive and easily depressed, and thus no fit company for a tortured spirit, were those who bore with me most eagerly; and a thing that gave me most courage of all was that though I felt over and over again, as the long months dragged away, that I was using up all the

resources of friendship, that I could not dare to make any further claims, and that I must for very decency drown alone, yet there never failed some one to slip forward just when I needed him, as though by some kind conspiracy of succour. It all seemed very little use at the time, but it forced me to behave with some courtesy and control, not to pour out my bitterness into all waters. And strange to say, the one quality that was left to me, after courage and hope had long been extinguished, was a sort of miserable courtesy that led me to try my best not to make my presence more irksome and unpleasant than need be. It was not a very exalted kind of courtesy, for it consisted more in a desire to gild my own misery a little, not to let it appear in all its nakedness. I was sorry indeed for those who could not avoid my proximity, but it must be sadly confessed that the aim of

my feeble attempts to appear unconcerned and interested, was not to solace them, so much as to disguise the ugliness of my barren brain, languid limbs, and lowering brow.

XVIII

AND thus let me advance to a further point and say frankly what difference my new idea of the inner life of the soul made in my relations with others. The danger of a spiritual experience is that it is so absorbing and so amazing that it is apt for a time to blur and distort the other values. There is of course a strong and secret current of thought in humanity, which may be regarded as the shadow of religion, or perhaps more philosophically as its essence and motive-force, to seclude oneself from the world. This is common to all religions, all attempts to realise and draw near to God. Asceticism, the life of the hermit and the fakir, the monastic life—these are all among its manifestations. It lays deepest hold of

the finest and purest spirits, and the essence of it, as has well been said, is "a horror of the most vital of all impulses," a horror of reproduction, ending in deliberate childlessness. It may be questioned whether the essence of it is a terror of fatherhood and motherhood, or an intellectual and spiritual disgust at the carnality of the process. I should believe myself that it was more the fastidious dislike of the gross claims of the body; the more that the intellectual and spiritual emotions are developed, the more does the mind resent the intrusion, the dictation, the frailty of the body, and the more does it plan to keep itself unconscious as far as possible of all physical and material impulses. One of the most insoluble of all mysteries is the process by which the race of man has drawn away from and ahead of the beasts of the field in inventiveness, in imagination, in

ethical speculation. He is not nearly the strongest of animals, and what the law is, which seems to have arbitrarily designed that one animal should inherit the power of reasoning, of profiting by experience, of using mechanical contrivances, is wholly beyond our power of speculation. How too the suspicion dawned upon man that his life here was not necessarily the end of his existence, is a secret that cannot be discerned; yet the funeral arrangements of even primitive man testify to a certain dim belief that death is not the end of life. As the reason becomes stronger and as man develops the power, apparently unknown to animals, of imagining the possibility of things being different to what they are, a disgust begins to grow up in the mind at the elements of pain and failure and suffering in life, so that the mind forms the design of guarding its security and tran-

quillity as far as it can. The effect upon the higher spirits is that they desire to isolate themselves as far as possible from unhappy things, and shun the ties and relations of life which are so fertile in unhappiness. Thus one gets the hermit, the man who makes no attempt to amend the world, but simply desires to leave it. The instinct to continue to live is so strong within him, that this desire to be free from the concerns of life has not developed into a cult of suicide. In the Christian Church, the desire for isolation no doubt derived a special sanction from the fact that our Lord Himself, the perfect man, by His example showed that perfection did not entail the forming of any human ties. Then came the further stage, as the altruistic instinct became stronger, the belief that it was possible to be isolated from the world and yet to improve the spirituality of the world

by intercessory prayer; and that conception has gathered to itself many sacred associations. If one reads a book like the *Confessions of Saint Augustine,* one sees what an intensely individualistic conception permeates it. The new light which breaks in upon him only enlightens him as to his relations with God, it does not arouse in him any impulse to the service of other men. It does not occur to him that to arrange comfortably and securely for one's own tranquillity and salvation, to have, so to speak, a private understanding with God, is in the least a selfish conception. It seems to Augustine the most natural thing in the world. Then that belief begins to alter insensibly, and the highest spirits begin to turn away in shame from a conception of religion which is merely a desire for moral security, a stoical ideal, a deliberate practising to become superior to pain and

calamity by avoiding the desires and designs which are quenched and marred by suffering, an attempt at invulnerability.

More and more do the highest spirits perceive that their duty is to the brotherhood of man; that there is much preventable sorrow and misery in the world, and that their work is to persuade men to prevent it. But still to all highly sensitive natures which shrink from action and effort, which are revolted by the coarseness, the stupidity, the brutality of the world, it is a great temptation to get away from it all, and to live life more congenially in the contemplation of perfection. The contemplative man finds the vision of moral purity and holiness so ineffably beautiful and sacred, that he is sorely tempted to conceal it, to enjoy it, to lose himself in it. If he speaks of it, the rough comments, the dull derision of the world is so wounding, so cruel, that he does

not venture to profane it. Here he diverges from the method of Christ, whose whole teaching was devoted to setting out in the simplest terms the beauty of holiness; and the amazing secret growth of Christianity, which ran like an electric pulse over the world, testifies to the fact that thousands of hearts had the same dim vision, and only needed that it should be defined.

In the present time, it seems to me, the conception of holiness as an inclusive rather than an exclusive force is gaining ground. Men are beginning everywhere to understand that spiritual happiness must not be the glee of possessing a secret treasure, but a thing to be quietly spoken of and produced and shared. Side by side with that has sprung up a sense of the sanctity of human relations. The tendency of modern thought is to proclaim the love that unites a man and a woman as one of the great

regenerative forces of life. If we look back into the minds of the great nations of humanity, we see that the Jews, among whom the moral ideal gained its highest force, had a very strong sense of the sanctity of such relationships, while they were not a nation among whom the ascetic ideal had any very great force. The Romans regarded marriage solely as a civil contract, and even a great idealist like Vergil had no belief in the sacred power of love, regarding it rather as a tragical kind of passion, which worked havoc among men. Plato himself, whose spiritual instinct was high and clear, makes no pretence of ranking the love of men and women as among the higher forces of life; it was a civic matter with him, and the friendship between man and man was the only high emotional relation which he really recognised.

It was Christianity which first recog-

nised the brotherly affections of mankind, apart from passionate affections, as a vital force: Christ spiritualised love; He indicated the possibility of its existing beyond the family circle, beyond even the peaceful associations of men, and of its extension to the indifferent and hostile.

Little attempt has been made in the world to realise this conception. Patriotism, self-interest, national expansion, the claims of property, have been held to be ethically justified in superseding the vision of universal love. That two Christian nations at war with each other should each appeal quite sincerely to Christ to show by bloodshed and conquest His approval of the justice of their cause, is a melancholy instance of the human power of self-deception, and its capacity for distorting truth into expediency. There are abundant signs today that civilised nations are beginning to

feel the deplorable inconsistency of this attitude. That the possibility of general disarmament should be openly discussed is a clear enough proof that the ideal is one that is echoed by many minds.

These are not merely impracticable dreams. An individual who feels that the world is advancing on these lines may not be able to put an end to the brutalities of the world; but he may resolve that his religion, whatever it be, shall be frank and unashamed; that he will attempt to cultivate simple and direct relations with all with whom he comes in contact. That he will not nourish resentments nor entertain prejudices; that he will not indulge in vehement reprisals; that he will cultivate candour and good-humour and sympathy; that he will sacrifice personal success and comfort and ambition to simplicity and loving-kindness. This then was the effect

of my experience: that it made me look out into the world, towards all those who seemed, fortuitously or designedly, to surround me, to claim my interest. The new gift of the spirit, the new secret, must affect that relation, must make some difference there. The new impulse, the regained zest, gave me a greater curiosity than ever about other people; but I could not now be content with just observing them, being pleased by their peculiarities, satisfied with detecting and assessing their qualities. I became more and more interested in what they felt about these wonderful things, why they felt as they did and acted as they did; I wanted to realise their inner life, to share their emotions and hopes, even their disappointments and sorrows.

XIX

A FRIEND of mine told me the other day that he was talking to a clever woman about democracy and its problems, and that she made a gesture of impatience at something that he said. He said to her by way of gentle provocation, "I see you are not interested in democracy." She paused for a moment, and then replied, "No, I am not; I am only interested in the kind of people whom democracy brings to the front." One feels the same, I think, the moment that one perceives the true worth of human relationship. Books, art of all kinds, even conversation, become not things that one cares about with a sort of connoisseurship, but revelations of personality —symbols, indications, hints, interpreta-

tions, bridges, so to speak, between one's own spirit and the spirits of others. After all, it is not the sculptured stone or the high-piled arch, or the ordered vibration of musical sounds, or the combination of pigments in a picture, that are beautiful; it is the human spirit behind, that has found something it wants to express, that has designed, contrived, planned, and executed. A friend of mine who has latterly taken an increasingly definite line of literary criticism, said to me the other day: "I hardly ever now read a book with any enjoyment of its subject or ideas; it is now almost entirely a question with me of how it is done." That seems to me an arid dictum; it is like a connoisseurship of food and wine, from which the humanity is practically eliminated. The epicure and the gourmet is not interested in the personality of the cook or the wine-producer,

and such connoisseurship seems to me to be a sterile, though possibly an amusing, thing. In all art, of course, the people who want to express themselves most, who find themselves constrained out of sheer delight to represent, to record, to imagine, to create, are the vivid people, who cannot simply take life as it comes, but have to criticise it, to interpret it, to render their own impression of it; and so one cares less and less about what is actually produced, and more about the quality of the soul behind it. The interest lies in what people are, even more than in what they do; but the interest one feels in any kind of art is the interest in the conception rather than in the method, though of course the more perfect the method is the more chance has the inner voice of making itself clearly heard. But technical excellence without spiritual vitality is a very uninteresting affair!

The difficulty with many very vivid and forcible personalities is how to get a common ground in which emotion can be felt. It is not uncommon in my experience to meet a man or a woman in whom one perceives, by their effect on other people, by the influence they exert, by the admiration and affection they attract, the existence of some fine, ardent, impulsive quality. Yet if one's interests lie altogether outside of the range of such a person's interests, how hard it is to find a medium of communication. I have never found it difficult to communicate with artists, even if I know very little about the terms of their art; but I should find it very difficult to communicate with engineers, mathematicians, people interested in horse-racing, military men, if they were absorbed in their subjects, though I might recognise in any of them vivid and ardent spirits. Art, litera-

ture, ideas form a common meeting-ground for me with others, though I fully recognise the fact that there may be many other people, who do not share in these interests, who have force, high-mindedness, generosity, affection, and other noble qualities. One ought to extend the range of one's interests as far as possible, that one may recognise kindred spirits; and it is with regret that one perceives that intellectual habits, artistic preferences, nationality, and even social customs, make a great barrier between human spirits. But so long as one confesses frankly that there are material limitations, so long as one recognises the live things moving behind the veil, one need not despair. What we must avoid, is a belief that it is easy to fall into, that the spirits of others are uninteresting because their pursuits seem uninteresting. One may recognise other spirits through their

pursuits rather than by them, while if one confuses people with their pursuits one finds oneself in a very dreary position indeed.

And then, too, one must despise no human signals—the signals of affection and sympathy, the cries for help or understanding. It is easy to do this, because one finds sometimes that they are only the shrill laments of mortified vanity, and that people are looking out, not for the sympathy which one might give them, but for the praise which one cannot give them. People often write to me, send me books and manuscripts which are nothing but worthless attempts to impress and to claim undeserved applause. If such people were to say, "I have something I want to express, but I cannot express it," it would be easy enough to fraternise; but they often desire only to have their vanity reassured, and

that one cannot do. Indeed it is often necessary that such vanity should be mortified, because vanity is the thickest of all the veils which hang between our spirits and other spirits, and it is not until that veil is torn down, at whatever cost, that one can begin to recognise other people at all. I do not mean that it is one's duty to mortify the vanity of others, but it is certainly a duty not to feed it; and insincere praise, which often seems a courteous solution, is not an expedient which one may indulge.

But if only others will speak candidly and frankly of themselves, even if the self revealed is a very frail and shivering thing, it is always deeply and truly interesting; and confession is often a more tonic medicine even than absolution. I remember once having a long conversation with a very egotistical young man, who aired a petty

grievance with all his might. I argued a little with him, but all that he did was to cry peevishly, "You do not understand; you cannot see the matter from my point of view!" I left it at that; but a little while afterwards he told me that the putting of his case into definite words had altered his whole view of it, and that he saw what a pitiable affair it all was. One can but follow one's instinct in such cases, and I have never done any good myself by being trenchant, incisive, or even what is called sensible; while I have gained more good from people who let me say my say, and just seemed rather ashamed that I should talk so, than from any expression of contempt or indignation.

But at all costs, at whatever sacrifice of prejudice or dignity or authority, one must somehow or other get into communication with other people. It is that for which

we live, and those are the subtle threads which we hold in our hands when we have passed beyond the reach of wind and sun.

XX

I AM sure, then, that one cannot and may not, however quietly and inoffensively, isolate oneself in any degree from mankind. That was the mistake I made in some of my earlier books, and I am sorry for it. Of course the artist must in a sense be isolated, if he sets his work high. The writer of books must have uninterrupted hours to read and write, and if he cares for his work, he must put the best of himself into it. He is bound to be absorbed, and when his absorption is over, there must follow a mood of some dryness and exhaustion. A few great writers, such as Walter Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens, contrived by superabundant vitality to live a full social life as well. Thackeray was a

diner-out, a talker, an editor, a draughtsman, utterly averse to seclusion. So eagerly did he desire the sight and sound and scent of life, that in his later years he would not even write in his study, but preferred his club or even the smoking-room of a hotel. Dickens too loved a sociable life, the acting of plays, entertainments of all kinds. Walter Scott wrote his great books in his quiet little fortress of work, in the dawn, when his guests were all asleep. But by day he was talking, entertaining, building, planting, shooting, hunting, and living the life of an active country gentleman. But then novelists cannot of course afford to cut themselves off from the very material out of which they weave their dreams.

Yet it is still more notable in the case of some of the most individualistic writers, to see how ardently and desirously they fol-

lowed at first their dreams and visions: the glades in the enchanted woods of fantasy in which they walked—glades separated even from the open pastures and the tilled fields of men, by acres of deep woodland, leafy passages, close-grown coverts, and still further remote from the city into all its streaming smoke—these were so dear and so near to them, that their hearts could hold nothing beyond the sunshine glittering on the fern, or the drip of the rain upon the fallen leaves, or the bird's song breaking from a thicket. But one comes to the end of that wood at last, the wood where it is always morning, with the westering shadows not yet fallen. That is the crucial time for the poet. Sometimes he can do nothing but peep backwards among the woodways, and mourn the loss of all that had been so sweet—but sometimes, and this is worthier, his heart goes flaming out

to all the dwellers upon earth, gay and mournful, wise and besotted alike. He becomes aware, waking from his dream, of a larger and more living secret, which he had come very near to missing, the sense of the great helpless army of men, walking idly or carefully between the dawn and the dusk. He is one of them, after all, though he has lingered apart from them. And this awakening is the moment when the man's greatness or weakness is known and decided, when his life turns swiftly upon its hinge.

I think it is true that all the great poets have had to face this awakening indeed, and all those other writers, who are poets in heart and work, although they have written no verses, or written them abundantly ill. With some it has smitten down their contentment and delight in tricks of musical words and melodious phrases; but

with the greatest it has wrought out a deeper and truer music, till their voice falls on the air like the bell that sounds at evensong across the house-roofs.

I can but say of myself that, on awakening out of my pain, I did become, however timidly and doubtfully, aware of this larger range of hopes and emotions. I had lived for twenty years of my life among boys and with my fellow-craftsmen. But in the lives and hearts of boys, though there is a great beauty of freshness and impulse, one does not become aware of humanity in its wholeness. They have seen but one side of the picture; and even in their faults and sins they hardly touch the shadow at all. The fault can be cured, the sin put away; they have not yet passed into the twilight, when the fruits of knowledge have all been gathered from the bough, and there is little left but the wish that it could all be done

over again, and when the reckoning has still to be paid. Besides, in the life of a schoolmaster, there is the swift passage of the generations. Just when the spirit begins to open to the light, the rank moves on, and the new rank takes its place.

When I left all that busy cheerful life behind me, there came in sight a whole host of suspended hopes and wishes, the hope of living life on one's own dear lines, the wish to take stock of garnered impressions, the desire to fill one's heart to the brim with all the quiet brooding thoughts and sights of life, which one had just grasped at before in flying moments, as the town-bred child, in his hour of holiday, fills his hands with leaves and flowers and berries.

There was the blunder! That I was so determined to live life on my own conditions, to make my own selection, to exclude

deliberately all the harsh and dreary elements; and it seemed so peaceable, so harmless, so successful!

And then out of the open sky there drove this sudden cloud that wrapped the landscape in shower, and made me conscious of nothing but a little space of weary hillside lashed with wind and moving stripes of rain. Yet I knew that all the beauty and sweetness of earth were there behind the storm, in the storm, though I could not see it or lay hold of it. The only beautiful thing left was the thing that I had before slighted. Companionship and friendship had been before but an easy sharing of joyful or curious experiences, like the talk of friends that walk together on the hills in a sunny morning. But now I was enveloped, as by some careful conspiracy of love, with an inexpressible tenderness and affection; a tenderness that only desired to

give, to shield, to help, when I had nothing to give in return but a helpless courtesy and a dumb gratitude.

And then, indeed, my eyes were opened, and I saw that there was a quality of love in the world, infinitely strong and patient, far deeper and mightier than the delight which had been the basis of my passionless alliances and comradeships. If I could but say or express the wonder of it! But it is a thing that can only be felt, and cannot rise to the surface in imagined words.

And so I came suddenly in sight of the great fellowship of man, which I had never discerned before in my foolish blindness. There it was, that great tide of love and care, moving silently about the rocky islets of life, obeying some vast and far-off impulse, yet all swaying in a secret unison of emotion. How had I overlooked it? I

saw now that many things which had seemed to me trivial and even grotesque phenomena, the partisanship of men venting itself in conventional phrases and uncouth formulæ, the absurd babble of meetings and gatherings, the mutual admiration of dumb and tiresome people, things which I had judged hardly and intellectually, were the signs and symbols of a great solid force, infinitely strong and real, with a reality which transcended all artistic and perceptive qualities and delights, values and hues, and colours and proportions, all the soulless or semi-soulless things, which are yet, I believe, the signs of some hitherward intention from afar, but when compared with the voice and accent of life, are but as the writing on the wall compared to its interpretation.

One can see all this at a glance, realise it, believe it, know it to be there, but yet

be very far away from making it one's own. That must come gradually and deliberately; but I saw, to use a homely enough simile, that I had been before but as the spider in the belfry, who is disturbed at intervals in his dusty web by the humming of the great bell, without ever guessing that the bell can have some further purpose than the mere flooding of the sun-streaked air of the stone-walled dim-beamed louvre with passing sound—never dreamed of it as the punctual voice of time heard in the city, and far beyond in the elm-girt homesteads, by which men divide the day and the night, and set a limit to their cares and their rest alike.

XXI

TIME and Space, those are the eternal difficulties. How is one to carry out that free contact with other spirits, in a scene where one must work to live, full of business and drudgery, with solitary toil to be done, débris and dust to be swept up, and where, even so, the poor body is so much at the mercy of material needs, such as food and sleep? One must not underrate work; it seems a condition of healthy life for most of us. Yet the greatest men of all have seemed to solve the question by not working at all! If the daily toil were so important, Christ Himself would surely have set an example of work, or have praised the sanctity of work; yet there is no evidence of His having toiled at all for a liveli-

hood, and all His teaching is against work, or at least the overshadowing cares of work. Anxiety for bodily needs—food and raiment and shelter—how light He made of them! The lilies in His parable neither toiled nor spun, Martha was rebuked for housewifely care. It was a gospel of simplicity, of peace, of love, never a gospel of work. Then look at Socrates, who deliberately spent his time in talk; St. Francis, who dared waste no time in thoughts of sustenance, but begged his bread from door to door. Life was not for these a place to drudge in, or to keep house in, still less a place to make a fortune. That was all a waste of time! The end of life was to mix with their kind, to ask questions, to tell stories, to talk, to utter their hopes in prayer. By which behaviour they indicated, as by an object-lesson, that to most of us the everlasting care for comfort and

food and fine houses and investments is a veil which hangs, lightly or heavily, between us and the truth. Those are the transitory things, but affections and friendships and mutual understandings and sympathies are the eternal things.

There is no great fear that men will too eagerly embrace that theory of life; indeed the hope may rather be that, as wealth gets slowly equalised, life will become simpler, and that we may return at last, every one of us, to enjoying the homely tasks of household life, which are no interruption to thought, but just a pleasant exercise for hand and eye and foot. If life were universally simple, there might be leisure for all men; and yet the strange thing is to see so many people obeying the instinct to accumulate, which is but the instinct to attain to leisure, and then when they have attained the possibility of it, to be unable

to drop the work which has become meaningless and mechanical.

But if we grant the necessity of toil for most of us, we are still all day long, in our toil as well as in our leisure, brought into touch with all kinds of spirits, young and old, with whom we may be in some relation, if we will. But what is it that separates us? Oftenest of all a kind of caution, a suspicion of others' motives, a terror of being taken advantage of, or derided, or despised. Then there are differences of class and tradition, differences of aim and ideal, differences of taste, the strange instinctive dislikes we have of each other. But the real obstacle is a selfishness, which makes us hold others hostile because we are afraid that our arrangements, our hopes, our accumulations, may be interfered with. We want to be realised, to be respected, to be feared, not that

we may do anything with our power when we have got it, but that we may feel secure, complacent, and superior; and so we begin to mistrust and avoid each other; we gild our hatreds by the names of ambition, of honour, of courage, of patriotism; but it all means the same thing in the end, to secure a den where we may be alone and furious, lie growling over our prey, wallow in our gains. But sometimes the soul contrives to put all that aside, and to make known the peaceful affection which it feels. In love, in friendship, in association, men begin to perceive that their interests are not all individualistic, but really common; that they can gain what they desire, a security and an ease of life, by claiming less and sacrificing more. The larger that a man's heart is, the less is it set wholly on his own advantage, and more on the deliberate sharing of his own happiness. Who

does not know the purest of all pleasures, the making of some definite sacrifice for the sake of one whom one loves?

But a man may say, "Yes, I see all that as a remote dream, beautiful enough, but impracticable! How am I to begin? I find myself in a narrow place, with many people about me whose interests conflict with mine, people who do not all like my way of life or my speech, who have no wish to come to terms with me. What practical step can I take in the direction of peace and affection?"

The answer is that we must discern and cast out of our minds the thoughts within us that vex and irritate others. We must not judge sharply, we must not censure, we must not clutch at good things, we must not suspect or strive. We must approach others as frankly and as gently as we can. Half the difficulty comes from our making

up our minds beforehand about people, taking for granted they will be contemptuous or hostile, anticipating disagreement. I recall the terrors I used to suffer as a young man at finding myself in an unfamiliar circle, especially if the pursuits of that circle were different from my own. There was the desire to conceal one's ignorance and unaptness, the wish to persuade the group of one's effectiveness; and yet on a brief acquaintance how simple and good-natured the ogres often turned out to be!

In a life like my own there is really no obstacle at all. In a place like a College there are many more people than time permits one to know, and most of them ready to respond to friendly overtures; and, as a writer, I have found it easy to say exactly what I think and feel, out of the heart. I have made many unknown friends through my books, by the medium of letters giving

me a friendly signal. There are, of course, plenty of people who do not like my books, think them sentimental, twaddling, wanting in dignity. I do not pretend to like the evidences of disfavour and contempt, because those are just the things I would avoid. But I mean to go my own way, nevertheless, not for the sake of fame or even money, but for the sake of the love, of which Shelley said that fame was but the disguise.

But if a peevish person asks me what is the point of seeking love, if he says that he does not value it or want it, that he desires to pass his life undisturbed and doing the things which please him, then I have no answer but to say that I believe that somewhere and some day he will too be drawn into the tide. One cannot resist the strongest thing in the world. I believe that the man who wishes to isolate himself from his

kind is like the knight of old following a wandering fire. Because I believe that we are all one, in reality; I do not mean that as a metaphor, but a statement of fact. The old preacher was derided for his sermon on unity, when he pointed to nature as a proof of his thesis, and said that there was one sun, and one moon, and one multitude of stars. The stars have their orbits and paths, their distinctness of light and distance, just as we have our separate bodies and ways of life; but they are but a floating shower of matter, and have a unity as of the sea. I believe that our spirits too have a unity like that, and are nearer to each other than comrades or brothers; and our task is to recognise that nearness and to draw as close as we can.

And so I would draw as near as I may to every human soul, near enough to signal, "Yes, that is you! you are there!" near

enough to recognise that we have all the same share and taste of life, the same joy in light, and health, and work, the same hopes and fears, the same greatness of awakening. I would like the barrier between my own spirit and the spirits of others to be utterly done away, and I would think of all humanity just as I think of my absent friend, whose smile, and speech, and movement come before me as I write, and whom I daily wish that I could see and hear. Of course there must be differences of regard; if the mind and heart, to say nothing of the body, dwell in the same region, love the same exercises, the same sights, the same sounds, it is easy enough. But one can establish a tie with most men and women whom one meets; and what one must not do is to shrink back into oneself and say, "Here is this person whom I shall probably never meet again;

we have nothing in common; why should I trouble to like him or to make him like me?" That is a sort of indolence that must be overcome; we must no more practise it than we must practise to spend the day in sleep, drowsing away the hours. The spring of life, which underlies all politics, all social combinations, all problems of work and government, is this endless desire of men not to be apart, but to come to terms with one another. The reason why we are imprisoned among contrary forces and clashing interests is that we may learn our way out of them. They have no sort of importance, except in so far as they help or hinder the deliverance of the soul from sundering barriers, and lead at last to mutual confidence.

I think that the reason why I feel this all so urgently now is that in becoming aware of the vitality and permanence of

my own soul, I have become aware of the vitality and permanence of all souls; and thus I do earnestly desire to turn my back upon the life of views, and sunsets, and solitary dreams. I have no sort of idea of doing other people good. I wholly misdoubt my power to do that. I have no consciousness of stores of strength, or virtue, or happiness, of which I have the distribution. I am quite unable to recommend my own example; it is not one to be followed. But I desire to know others, to realise their ideas, to evoke their sympathies, to understand them. It is there I believe that the whole worth and virtue of life lies. Because our own ideals and aims, which have perhaps some beauty in them, are all stained by temperament and prejudice. Yet I believe that the inmost mind of humanity is set on what is pure, and kind, and true, and beautiful, and I

would have my own weak purposes strengthened and corrected by the touch of other minds and hearts.

One need not foolishly idealise, or even more foolishly idolise, though it is hard not to do that when one comes in contact with frank and generous persons, and sees the very thing done so finely which one has so elaborately missed.

And there are times, too, in the face of something solemn and tragic, when one does come wonderfully and suddenly near to a human spirit. I passed to-day through a little village, and saw in the churchyard a crowd of people standing and looking into a newly-dug grave; on the wall was leaning an old and dreary man, lame and disabled, not a heroic old man at all, but a tippler, I should think, from his face and aspect. I stopped for a moment and asked him whose funeral it was. He had

been comforting himself, I suppose, in his own way, but he had thus let loose that touch of poetry which lies within so many spirits, or pierced the veil of bashfulness which involves so many of us Englishmen. He told me in a few words that it was the grave of an elderly labourer, who had died quite suddenly three days before. Then he said to me, "He was a friend of mine, he was! He was a suffering man, and a good quiet man. I was talking to him here on the day before he died, and he was saying how full the churchyard was of graves. He did n't think he was to go so soon, and that in four days I should be seeing him laid away here. I shan't be long after him, I know; but it seems sad to die, somehow!"

Two tears globed themselves in his dim old eyes and fell down his cheeks. He gave me a look, and I knew that I understood him and he me, and that we both felt the

terror of the dark and the love of all familiar things.

I am afraid I should not have liked the old man as a companion; but I realised, through it all, that we were somehow companions, in spite of our differences and behind them. And I felt too that that moment was worth more to both of us even than a day of what I call important work; and indeed that what we have to do is to disentangle ourselves somehow from our solid ways and dignified prepossessions; to realise that comforts and pleasures and events pass and are as nothing, as the frosty breath that fades upon the air; but that what matters, what affects us, what remains is the fact that we can become aware of other spirits, hampered, it may be, and burdened and confined, to whom we are both near and dear, if indeed we are not closer and more united than any human word or thought can define.

XXII

And so I saw that not only must one keep one's hand linked with the warm arm of life, but that one must have work, not only work of one's own choosing, but uninteresting, hard, tiresome work—work, shall I say, which one would always rather not begin, and of which the chief pleasure was to finish it, with perhaps the added grace of finishing it well. There was another mistake—how my mistakes rose up round me one by one, finger on lip, and smiled at me! It will not do to work only at things which delight and excite one; they lose their savour, as though one for ever fed oneself on delicacies. There must be porridge days and mutton days, as William Morris said in his blunt way—not a perpetual feast.

One can't avoid one's inherited tendencies. My ancestors were for a long time yeomen and tillers of the soil, then merchants and tradesmen, then teachers and writers. None of my family have ever been absolved from the necessity of earning a living. I am bourgeois to the marrow of my bones, and have no faculty for high-handed leisure.

If one works solely at what is a pleasure, minute by minute, one exhausts the faculty of pleasure; but if one cannot do as one would, cannot go off on a spring morning among the green-specked copses, or on a day of golden and frosty haze among red autumn woodlands, how much sharper and keener is the pleasure when it comes at last! It is not a case, this, of the duty of work. I believe in the duty of industry with all my heart for all; but the power to select all one's work, to reject all drudgery, all tiresome detail, is a hedonism

which is against wholesome life. The dry business—I need not specify it—which one must face and swallow, is a tonic which we all need, and most of all the artist. Some artists get it in the course of their work—the setting out of the palette, the manipulation of pigments, the moulding of clay, the chipping of stone, the mathematical task of orchestration—all these and many other things give certain artists the mechanical relief they need; but the reflective writer has no such concrete accessories; the grain of thought and impression is ground into flour, dribbles from the hopper into the sack, and all the mechanical work is done inside the gear of the brain. The more exultant and delicious the work is the more dangerous it is. Is there, I wonder, any delight like that of feeling the sentence take shape and run from the furnace into the mould?

But we need discipline! and miserable as it is at the time to try to get some delicate thought into shape among petty interruptions and meaningless courtesies, the tense wires do thus lose their perilous crystallisation.

I do not want at once to diminish or ever to sweep away the drudgery of the world. I only want to diminish the wasteful drudgery spent on such things as armaments to scare the nations from flying at each other's throats. I want to diminish the labour poured out on ministering to the whims and caprices of the wealthy. I want the drudges of the world to have time to cultivate a taste for simple and beautiful things. It is not that the materials or the opportunities of wholesome pleasure are wanting in the workaday world. Printing, picture-reproduction, railways have brought the pleasure of beautiful and interesting

thoughts, the joys of art, the sight of the green places of the earth and of the breaking sea within reach of almost all—if that was what they wanted! There is enough provender to feed the imagination of all, if there were imagination to feed. The problem is not how to give mankind the things for which they do not care, but to make them care for the things they have. That seems to me the one sad lack of our well-equipped and efficient schools, that they do not touch the imagination or the heart. The cure of our evils lies in the imagination and the heart.

Instead of teaching those whose lot is labour, to enjoy labour, and to enrich leisure, they are taught to envy sedentary labour, and to need melodramatic excitement.

But I wander from my point, which is that the world is rich in pleasure, if one

could but first set the minds of men upon the delight of work, and also turn their minds upon the natural delights of life instead of the artificial amusements.

And here, I think, comes in what is the worst of all our mistakes, that we set ourselves to encourage in every form the instinct of competition and rivalry. We do not reward the patient, and the kindly, and the good-humoured; we reward the strong, and the dexterous, and the self-sufficient, and the insolent. We get into the heads of our children the idea that they must beat others and secure all the advantages they can. That seems to me the poisonous flavour of my own school-days—the marks, the distinctions, the athletic prizes. Everything done for those who could seize and hold and perform, nothing for the unselfish and slow and clumsy, except discredit and contempt and the sympathy full of humiliat-

ing pity. The children who ought to be rewarded are those who, with no hope of success, turn out patient and honest work, love duty, and practise brotherliness. Yet these are pitied for stupidity and sheepishness, and the crown falls upon dash, and aplomb, and quickness. The end should be the love of work, and the content of leisure, and the peace of home.

Well, I think that if such ideals had been held up before me, I could have been trained in them and come to love them. But I was encouraged to attempt to dazzle, and surprise, and please, and win if I could the prize which another desired. I was saved, I think, as a boy and as a young man from the full disaster of the system by being indolent, timid, and peace-loving; but I learned to dislike my work and to waste my leisure. Then through my active professional life, the interest of the boys

about me, the vanity of successful work, the pleasure of being praised and perhaps needed, kept my labour from failure; but new interests, or old ones long suppressed, rose rebelliously, till at last I cut myself adrift and plunged as I have said into the congenial delight of literature.

I do not regret it—only thus, by candid experiment, can one learn one's lesson. But I now know that one cannot do without drudgery, without work which holds one back from self-pleasing and intemperate pursuit of joy. The divine task is, if possible, to turn the waters of life into the wine of life, as at the marriage feast so long ago. The walls of the house of life must be firmly and severely built, however much one may adorn them with pictured ideals and tapestries that refresh the eye with their woven colours, their still forms.

XXIII

WHEN I say that one must not lose sight of or touch with humanity, I am not speaking of mere seclusion of scene or domicile. There are people who, wherever they lived, would hardly be secluded; they would seek ties of some sort and ensue them. Such are the people who without any kind of strain, or inquisitiveness, or purpose, but by some beautiful natural instinct, meet all alike on some easy common ground, even if it be a smiling silence, for whom it is enough that others should be there. But I have no such gift. Yet I am possessed with the no less instinctive desire to find out all about the people with whom I am brought into juxtaposition, to commune with their hearts and search out their

spirits. I want to know their tastes, their ambitions, their circumstances, their purposes, their prejudices, their reasons, and their dreams. I desire to compare my own experiences and aims with theirs, to establish connecting doors in our respective minds, to be free of their house of work, their garden of reveries. And thus a stolid, or a secret, or a conventional person, armoured and vizored, is an exhausting business, because I want them to betray their preferences and to give themselves away. And to people of this observant and explorative type, though this process is easy and pleasant enough in high health and spirits, it is apt to become rather a torture if one is tired, or preoccupied, or languid. The thing has to go on just the same, mechanically and drearily, without zest or animation, just as the exhausted musician fingers endless passages, and the

wearied card-player plays endless imaginary games. And then again one can be secluded without being apparently unsociable, if one retires within a bodyguard of chosen friends, and affects no society except what is absolutely habitual and familiar. Every one has the right to have an inner intimate circle, and indeed a life without it is a very mechanical thing. But the touch with life which one must not lose is the touch which comes of definite work, when one has to form relations with people whether one likes them or not, to do business with them, to adjust oneself to their prejudices, to take into account the fact that they view things differently, and very possibly consider one's own view to be perverse or incomplete. That is what makes for elasticity of mind, when one knows that a colleague, let us say, thinks one's views fantastic or absurd, and one has to try to

convince him not only that one has a right to one's view, but that there is something in it which he is inclined to miss or to despise unduly. To have to make the best of a situation, to manage people, to compromise, even to give way when unconvinced, to get hard knocks from other men's prejudices, to realise with painful surprise that one is thought wilful, or meddling, or inadequate; to realise that one's own beloved views carry no weight at all, or are viewed with suspicion or dislike. To make mistakes, to burn one's fingers, to lose a chance by being insistent, to give offence unintentionally, to learn that one cannot have one's own way however reasonable and fruitful it appears,—all this is wholesome and useful, and it cannot be attained without having definite work to do in the company of others. It is no good to screw up one's ideals too high in this respect, or to

approach life with an urgent sense of responsibility and with a great programme about helping others. One has to make them desire to be helped in the first place, and in the second place to desire that one should be the person to whom they can confidently and hopefully appeal. If there is one attitude that I mistrust it is the attitude of those who intend to exercise influence. It merely means, as a rule, a temperament both self-righteous and unsympathetic. One cannot approach life on these terms. One must be thankful to be allowed to play a part at all. Simply to love people as they are and for what they are, or if one cannot like them, to be interested in them, and if possible amused by them—that is a far more wholesome attitude. One cannot present oneself with a captain's commission in the army of life, and nowadays one cannot even purchase it!

Promotion must come by merit, and few people who deserve it fail to receive it.

In England, of course, the temptation to make or obtain a position is very great. We are a deferential nation and believe in subordination. We have a wide and elaborate system of labelling people, and it is very convenient to have a full label. If one has ideas to ventilate or suggestions as to the conduct of life to offer, the temptation to get a clear label is very great, because people in England will listen to a man that is thus labelled, and respect his ideas, when they will not attend to a free lance or respect him. It is not very easy to say what one thinks in England. It is very easy to find out what other people think and to say that, and the power of agreeing emphatically with popular and commonplace ideals is perhaps the most useful power, from the point of view of

advancement, that a man can develop. The English system cuts both ways; the possession of an office or a post often improves men of unobtrusive, commonplace, sensible minds, because it gives them confidence and decision, and teaches them to act justly and kindly. But I have known far more people whose minds have been stifled and cramped by position and office, men of real force and original qualities, because it is so fatally easy to fall in with conventional standards, and to earn comfort and respect thereby.

And thus the man who has opinions and ideas is very often in a difficulty. He needs above all men a definite work and a tangible connection with the world; and yet on the other hand he must not, if he values his qualities, get overwhelmed by official entanglements and tiresome business. All gatherings of people in England for pur-

poses of organisation tend to lose themselves in procedure and finance; they organise impulse and ideals away; they have to compromise everything, and make up a system that will satisfy none, and yet not give an excuse for overt dissatisfaction to any. I have been greatly struck lately in reading the *Life of Carlyle,* to see the wonderful way in which by some guiding providence he was headed off from ever obtaining any official post whatever. He was at one time always trying to get a professorship, where his freedom of speech would have been hampered and his wings clipped.

The object, then, of the reflective man should be to engage in some definite simple humble work of indisputable usefulness, and work out his ideals as far as he can. If he does not do this he loses a sense of proportion and actuality. He passes into artistic reveries, and grows to value tone,

and quality, and grouping, and picturesqueness above everything. But if he has a hold on life, then the dreamful quality that is in him enlightens and enlarges his work, makes it fruitful and suggestive, gives it balance and vitality. The ambition which becomes pompous and arid, if it sets itself to obtain tangible distinction and situations of dignity and emolument, converts itself into a far more vital force, the force which turns the wheels of the world, and is bent, not upon making a splash and beating the waters into foam, but in running as swiftly and silently as possible among quiet fields and under leaning trees, from sluice to sluice, and from mill to mill. The ambition that thus comes to a man is the ambition, not to be known to have striking views, and to be praised for their attractive presentment, but the far deeper and truer joy of turning the current of thought

in the right direction, of increasing energy and labour, of helping on the cause of order and of peace. One is concerned then not with riding gracefully over the billows, but with the secret of the wind, and the pulse of the bounding sea; and one comes to perceive the infinite delight of being inside the forces of the world, in unison with them, rather than in catching from them the barren joys of triumph and applause.

This was, may I humbly and gratefully say, a gift from the dark clouds which overhung me for so long, a sense of the real worthlessness and even ugliness of personal prestige, and the dull impostures of distinction—the tiresome heavy incommoding trappings of life. Glory became revealed as a foolish and fretful kind of game, not worth the candle. To use one's faculties, not for the joy of exercising them, or for the pleas-

ure of seeing fine thoughts and great ideas multiply and grow, but for the pleasure of strutting in absurd processions, of occupying seats of honour—all the ceremonial side of life, so pretty and harmless a thing, if it be but as the gold frame of the picture, but so barren and distressful if it be made the goal of one's efforts!

Yet how easy it is to deceive oneself in the matter! the further danger of the subtle force of vanity is to come to think it distinguished to be undistinguished, to wrap oneself in a robe of proud unworldliness, to desire the hideous snobbishness of refined abstention. That is the meanest thing of all, to have one's eye on the world after all, to stimulate its interest by refusing to gratify its curiosity. From this may common-sense and decency deliver us. Let me say frankly that it is very hard for a writer who, like myself, attains a certain measure

of popularity by a knack of attractive writing, not to be inflated by all the private and touching and interesting communications which he receives from many quarters. But it brings little excuse for vanity! One sees so clearly where it comes from. If one writes candidly and with some design of sympathy, there are abundant hearts open, men and women who are lonely and uncomforted, in uncongenial circumstances and surroundings, who touch hands with a writer if they know that he has failed much and often, in many ways, and is not ashamed to confess it. No one can be more conscious than I am of perfectly merited failure to carry out my designs or to impress my views upon the world. It has come, as failures do come, not from want of capacity so much as from weakness of will and shallowness of nature. I say this not unconcernedly but frankly, and I wish

I could think otherwise. But I do not doubt the truth of my visions and my hopes, though I have not made them live and prevail. But all the chances I have missed, all the mistakes I have made, the infirmity and timidity of heart that follows me close and dark as a shadow, are things which I rejoice to see and recognise, because they have shown me my place and my rank, and have enabled me to find my level. The publican nowadays is apt to glory in his humility and to thank God that he is not as the Pharisee. But I do not want to do that. The blessing is to know the truth, however hard and ugly the truth may be. So with the mire and clay of the Slough of Despond about one, struggling out of the cartloads of texts which had been shot to mend the slobberiness of the place, one gets one's feet upon the road of pilgrimage; and across the fields of dark mountains, the

pearly radiance and the high melodies of the celestial city come faintly but unmistakably through the fresh and wholesome air.

XXIV

Soft warm winds blowing large and tranquil from the south, laden with secrets of hope and mysteries unfulfilled, breathing the breath of life! Think of the wind gathering up a thousand aromatic scents from wakening flowers and gummy buds, as it passes viewless over woodland and copse, now when all creatures turn to each other with delight, when hand seeks hand, and glance intercepts glance. The spring came upon me too, and danced in my blood, not a wild fling, but a sober minuet or Pavane—ceremonious, perhaps, with all its bowings and stately advances, but a kind of wooing too for all that. Just to live—that was enough; and all creatures that I passed, from the hen scratching furiously

in the byre, drawing back, and inspecting the excavation with fierce eyes and resolute pecks, to the sheep eating against time, were filled with a secret glee, as though they said, "Yes, this is me, just here, in the best place in the best of worlds!"

The mouldering tower of the church was enchanting—it looked down at me with a solemn twinkle in its shuttered eyes over the whitening orchard. The children flung wildly out of school and tore down the street, a phalanx of little trotting legs, in a desperate hurry to get as much into the time as they could. No one and nothing asked any questions—why born, whither tending? Life was just a skip, hop, and jump, bursting with interest and delight. The flowers in their quieter way felt it too. They stared with widely-opened eyes, and poured out their clean breath upon the air. Even as I went, drinking in a hundred

charming impressions, a brisk current of underthought swept through my brain. "Yes, and then there is this and that ahead of me—work, letters, that will not take long —then there is the evening, and I shall see A— and B—, and there will be this to talk about and I shall tell them that. Yes, that is all right." It was hard to say what it was all about, this cheerful appetite for life, but one did not stop to ask questions. It was all so perfect at the time, but now when I come to put it down, it seems to have nothing in it. I laughed because I was happy; I was happy because I was alive. Did I think of the fifty years behind me? not for a moment. As I passed the churchyard and saw the tumbled mounds of grass and the leaning graves, I had a sudden twinge of sorrow and pity for those condemned to sleep, shoulder by shoulder, in the dark loam, when there was so much need

to be up and doing. But even so there came upon me in a flash the sense that they *were* up and doing, that life was all there, neither less nor more than it had ever been, that no extinction of that was possible; and I turned in thought to all my brothers and sisters of the past, who had suffered the great change, and knew that they were somewhere still, living and rejoicing in life.

Not all happy, perhaps! The invalid boy, with his long thin hands, sitting in the cottage garden among the damasked mezereons, gave me a wistful smile as I passed; but I felt that even in his case the angel of the spring was bending over him, kissing the pale brow and whispering secrets of things assuredly coming. We have our rightful joys, I think, each one of us; and as much of pain as we need to teach us what we are blessed by knowing. I cannot explain it nor understand it, but if I could, there

would be no need for the dark and silent hour. We cannot have what we wish, but there is some great tide behind us and about us, which bears us where it wills and as it wills. Sometimes we move in the clear fresh stream, in the crystal spaces among the water-weed, swaying all one way like green tresses. Sometimes we poise in quiet backwaters, and sometimes we plunge through roaring sluices, or bear away the filth of the world. Yet our suffering is but the condition of our loving. If we love we must suffer, whether it be that we cannot get the full answer to our love, or whether we have to bear the sorrows of those whom we love. But perhaps the worst sorrow of our love comes from our selfishness—because we want to claim for ourselves, for our use and delight, the loves of others. And that is what pain is wearing away for us, I am sure—the selfishness

of love. Even now, at my age, there are friends, there is one friend whose image comes across me as I write, of whose affection I want to be sure, and am not. He is a worker like myself, but some shadow has fallen across our friendship; he mistrusts me in some way, he will not show me what is in his heart. Now, at this season when life turns to life, and desires to be somehow knit together, I turn with a gentle hunger of heart to the thought of him. I want to fare onwards in his company, to exchange thoughts and fancies with him as of old. But he is withdrawn from me; and I hate the shadow, whatever it is, that parts us; and then there comes too a yearning for the sight and nearness of those whom I have loved, who stand on the other side of death. I want to see them, to be at ease with them, to catch their kind glances, to tell them how I loved and love

them still. But to-day in this blessed leaping forward of life and hope, they seem as near as ever, and a hundred times more dear for the crystal wall that severs us.

In the days of my sore illness there was nothing which fell so chill upon the heart as the solitude to which it condemned me. Those strained and aching cells seemed to pen me up in a lonely sorrow. I could not stretch out my hand past it. I had no love to give, and I could not receive it either. I just knew it was all about and above me, but I could not feel it, and when I felt it, it hurt like scalding water. I visited one day, I remember, a beloved place where I had lived as a child, and where every corner, every road, every tree was full of memories, infinitely sweet and beautiful, of old careless happy days. But the thing seemed like some far-off picture, painted in radiant hues, and lost for ever. I sate

down wearily in a little woodland aisle, which turned delicately, with its green floor and leafy sprays, into the heart of the great wood, with all the towering beeches and dark red-stemmed pines. How often I had come and gone there, a cheerful child, full of solemn business and plans. There was a blue clay there that oozed from the ditch-side; that had to be conveyed away in parcels wrapped in chestnut leaves for purposes of moulding; the little pine-tassels with their fragrant dust had to be nipped off, or the green pungent cones, and laid up in a secret store; and at the end of the walk there was the bright nursery, with the new-cut loaf, and the story-book afterwards, and the half-hour with my father to see pictures, or to have a picture drawn . . . and then the good nights, as if one were parting for ever, and could hardly bear to think of the sleep that must intervene be-

fore another of those full sweet days dawned, with the birds piping in the garden thickets. All this came back on me, and I prayed to die, so separated from life and hope did I seem.

And now I seem to have come back with the heart of a child, with every sound and scent of life as fresh and full of delight as ever. It is worth passing through the darkness for that alone. Now, too, I do not even seem to desire, as I did when, unknown to me, the darkness was drawing on, to make the most out of every moment, and to taste the luxurious sorrow of the dying sweetness of life. I want to take it as it comes, to wonder, to learn, to live. I want to clasp hands closer with all I love, not to waste time in foolish misunderstandings and mystifications, but just to say frankly what I feel, and to perceive what others are feeling. How can I de-

scribe the significance with which it is all charged? But it is not now a mere search for emotions; in those darkening days I wanted to feel at every instant, to taste the essence of everything, and to sweep aside all the moments when my feast was interrupted. Now I desire rather to live on such terms as I may, to reject nothing, to avoid nothing. Not to gorge and stuff myself with life, but to be restrained and grateful.

To-day as I passed by a little thorn-thicket on the road, I heard a thrush utter deliberately and slowly his great full notes, all charged with life and delight. That was his thought about it. The day of toil and search was over, and in his hour of reflection, as the light began to gather westward in orange channels among the purple cloud-islands, he said and sang just that—the passion and the sweetness of life. Even

so would I speak and think, drawing my song out of reality and experience, and not grudging the dull hours that must elapse ere the right to sing is earned.

XXV

I HAVE learnt by experience that it is not good to be much alone, but I have not learnt not to enjoy solitude. It is a sweet cup enough, but a subtle poison lurks in its pale beaded amber transparency. It is mischievous, because in solitude the mind runs its own busy race unchecked. To have to mix with other people, to find things that interest them, to humour them, to watch their glances and gestures, is to a person like myself who is constrained, less even by sympathy than by courtesy, to try to be agreeable, a real and wholesome discipline. I do not want to make myself out as unselfish or genial; but it is a pain to me if any one in whose company I am is discontented or displeased, and I am con-

sequently obliged, for my own comfort ultimately, to keep other people in a good humour. But whether it is altruism or courtesy or mere self-interest matters little. Left to itself, my mind develops a sort of mechanical current, plods along a beaten track, sets itself one way like a flag in a steady wind, and the result is a sort of stupor which is enervating and morbid. It becomes stagnant, and just as stagnant water gives a chance for all sorts of slimy, coiling, flaccid things, half-animal, half-plant, to breed and huddle in the dim warm liquid, so it is with the mind; while the touch of life freshens and enlivens it, like a pool through which a stream flows and ripples.

But to-day there was no choice. I was living that summer at Crummock Water. My friend was summoned away to town on business, and my next guest was not due

to arrive till Monday. So as I had to be alone, I determined to enjoy it, just as one enjoys shirking an engagement if one is ill. I went out soon after breakfast like a happy pilgrim. I had my staff and my provender and a note of the way. I struck up into the hills by a narrow path which led up the gorge of a torrent between two scarred and blackened mountains, plodded on, looking about me, with my mind swaying idly like a water-lily in a lake. It was fiercely hot in the lonely vale of streams, in which I abode, like the narrow soul in Ossian. The flies buzzed fiercely about me. The track soon vanished in the hillside. Now I walked on green turf, now on grey boulders tumbled from the crag. I ploughed through bilberries and bracken, or splashed through rushy bogs. The quiet folds of the hills, overlapping each other as the streamlet turned, all full of a golden haze, were

beautiful enough; till I came out on a great grassy ridge, with the green shoulders and craggy buttresses of big mountains all round me; and looking over I saw that the streams fell the other way, and at the end of a vast smooth valley I had a sight of fields and woods, the glint of a lake and a little clustered grey town. The whole thing was like a background in an old picture. I have often wondered how the ancient painters can have fancied that the world ever looked like that; and now I saw that, allowing something for conventional sight—for we see what we learn to see, and what our fathers have seen, not what our eyes really behold—and for immature handling, the world did really look like that. Those hills there were really azure blue, and the curves and facets of the crags beyond were really, seen in miniature, like the conical sections of a custard pudding helped by a spoon—

a gross metaphor, but there is nothing else that expresses it—the whole place indeed looked not like mountains weathered and worn, but like sand moulded into shape by eager childish hands and abandoned before the design was complete. "His hands *prepared* the dry land"—I could not help thinking of that.

Up here the air was fresh and invigorating. I followed the stream to its secret fastness, where it brimmed a tiny pool, all cushioned round by exquisite soft water-mosses, out of which pricked the strong spikes of the golden hill-asphodel, the loveliest of mountain-loving flowers.

There I ate and drank, and like the elders on the mount, I saw God.

Yes, I saw Him, felt Him, rested under His great hand, breathed His patient influence. It all came on me in a moment, and in a moment it was gone, before the drop

that trembled at the pool edge could globe itself and drip upon the stones below. I was in His presence, a spirit so old, and wise, and great, that I knew for an instant how foolish and childish it is to wonder, or to grieve, or to complain, because His laws are so august and so tremendous that one must rejoice with all one's frail heart that one is ruled by them; whose tenderness is so perfect and all-embracing that there is no room to doubt or fret; who, if He seems to be severe or indifferent, is only so because He has waited so long and has so long to wait; who has suffered and endured and grieved so much, that pain and sorrow is no more to Him than the fleeting shadow of a bird, flying over a field of golden wheat; and whose design is so vast, so incredibly joyful, so speechlessly serene, that the doubts and griefs and sorrows of all the men and women that have ever lived

are but as the trivial ripple on a mighty ocean of peace. That was the vision; and there came on me such a sense of hope and eager expectation and far-reaching love, that I felt utterly swallowed up and enfolded in it, as a drop of wandering water that sinks into the bosom of the sleeping lake.

What did my sins and sorrows, my ambition and my dreams matter, after all? They had done their work for the soul, and had fallen to the earth, as the withered leaf drifts from the forest tree. If one could but keep that blessed flame alight in the heart, how easy life would be! I knew that life had not been easy, and that it would not be easy; but I seemed in a flash of thought to see myself faring onwards, bewildered perhaps, and heavy-laden, or elate and active, till my time came to breathe out my soul upon the night, and to be united with God once more, without the

sad sense of separation given me by this little complex frame, in which my infinite dreams are now confined.

I bestirred myself at last, and went up to a big hill-summit, of splintered crags and streams of stones, that lay to the right of me. The world was spread out before me. I saw the plain laid out in fields, wood-dappled, sun-caressed. Beyond lay a great sapphire estuary—and down at the edge, where the river on whose sources I stood widened to the tide, I saw a great clustered town, with its tall chimneys spouting smoke. It was horrible, in the racing wind, among the shadowy hill-ranges, in the waste of air, to think of men toiling in hot factories, of children playing in mean streets, of women in frowsy rooms, tending fractious babies or preparing reeking meals. The wonder was, how came life to be so ugly, so gross, so full of stuffiness and dirt, of noise and

care, of soil and stain, for so many? If one were courageous and loving, would one naturally plunge into the midst of it, fight for the weak, share one's joys, spend oneself freely, fling one's own life into the polluted stream? Was it mere fastidiousness, weakness, selfishness, that kept one back?

Yes, it is that, in a sense. If I were full of compassion, and love, and energy, and hope, I should doubtless go down into that confusion, that waste of waters, as men and women do go, not with a sense of rich endowments and comforting ideals, to distribute them as from a box; still less with a sense of grim rectitude, and superior principles, to censure and to restrain—but simply because I could not help it, as I should hasten to help a drowning comrade or to save an animal from brutal cruelty. But, as it is, I do not wish to excuse my-

self with subtle reasons, or to claim to have appropriate and sufficient work of my own. Yet I am sure that if by some constraining sense of shame or justice, I did bind myself to such a work, I should have nothing that I could say, nothing that I could give, no reserves of strength or courage or hope, to lavish upon the less fortunate. What is needed is a certain positiveness, a certain dogmatism, a firm persuasion that one is on the right path oneself, a fixed belief that one knows how to help, and what the acts and thoughts are that would bring happiness to those who are crushed under the pressure of social conditions. Such lost creatures as form the scum and sediment of towns like these want nothing that I could give them. They want robust kindliness, tender peremptoriness, good-humoured patience, strong common-sense, simple outspokenness. They would not understand

the language, still less the substance of the visions which haunt me, and of the dreams that inspire me; the best I could give would be a sort of lyrical passion of hope and beauty, which would seem to them mere rhapsody. And then too one makes a senseless blunder in allowing oneself to feel of these towns as if the dwellers all lived uneasy and darkened lives, conscious of hard conditions, longing for light and beauty. The majority of them desire nothing of the kind, they are perfectly satisfied with life as they find it. Their labour does not oppress them; they simply take it as a natural condition of existence, and they seek to fill their leisure with full-flavoured pleasure, food and drink, noisy sociability and gregarious excitement. The men love their dogs and their betting, football matches and outings. The women love their homes and their household cares, their babies, and

their gossip. Art, music, poetry, are to them mere tedious forms of boredom. They don't want them, and think them all stuff. And for myself, I don't want them merely to think they want them, I want them to feel the need and the craving for them. I merely desire to have agencies to give them the kind of things I value, when they need them and if they need them. I do indeed think that the life and the hopes of humanity are slowly widening and rising, but God seems to me to be going at His own pace in His own way. To use an image, what is happening seems to me to be something like this. A father has gone up a hill with his children. They have come out on the brow, they see their house far below, the garden, the roofs, the chimneys, the lane. The children, half laughing and half fretful, would persuade their father to go straight down among the crags—that is

the quickest way, and the hour is late. They can see every bit of it, and it is just a sort of staircase. But the father knows that they must turn their back upon the goal, and descend by shelving hill-shoulders and through sloping bracken. It seems so tedious, but it is the only way!

Yet there seems such a waste of wealth, such a sacrifice of energies to trivial ambitions and conventional pleasures, such mischievous indolence fretting to be wholesomely employed. It seems sometimes as if there were indeed two great spirits at work instead of one. The good spirit desiring health, and simplicity, and justice, and loving-kindness, but not strong enough to make men desire them too. The dark spirit loving ruinous excitement, the pleasure that beckons to death, indolence, lust, pain, destruction, and hiding his deceit under a veil of momentary satisfaction.

And what is worse, the dark spirit seems to have on his side so much that is sensible, and practical, and true; while the spirit of light has nothing to offer but vague dreams and starry silences and airy exaltations.

No, I must hold fast to the slender clue I have. I must work, as quietly as I can, at my own tasks, which seem so often trivial and hollow enough, and I must bear as I can the sense that I may after all be but a skulking and delicate traitor in the midst of an urgent fight. Yet I do with all my heart desire simplicity and truth, order and quiet labour, joy and peace. I would give them, if I knew how, by lavish handfuls. I would see each man's life wholesome and sincere, full of kindliness and country toil, and familiar household ways. I would give them work, and love, and laughter, and sleep, so that they should open their eyes day by day on a world of

which they loved the very vesture, the hills and streams, the changeful seasons, and rise eager for toil and leisure alike in the old homestead and the familiar scene. I would have them daring and adventurous —but their boldness should involve no hurt to man or beast. They should be proud rather than vain, neither mean nor covetous, neither spiteful nor melancholy—it all seems within reach of the hand; and yet the world by some dastardly delusion seems to turn its back upon it all.

The peace of the solitude where I sit seems a mute reproach. For the essence of the peace of the hills is that they are haunted by no miserable memories or evil designs. Nothing tragic, or vile, or abominable, can ever have happened here, none of the things that stain or shadow the memory. These slopes are threaded but by lonely shepherds tracking sheep, or

happy travellers strong and careless, or perhaps by a solitary dreamer like myself, straining wistful eyes to the land of promise.

The flies flicker about the fern, the bee hums over the thyme, the beetle blunders through the grass, the moor-pipit flutters out of the brake, the sheep graze on the ledges. Even here there is bewildered pain, no doubt. The grazing sheep crushes the insect in the grass, the hawk strikes at the fluttering brood, the lamb shivers in the aching snowstorm; but that pain is different from mine, for it does not torture itself by thinking how easily it might all be different, or why sorrow should be. Yet the world is sweet and beautiful enough. Even while I mused the sun began to slope to his setting and the shadows fell eastward. I bestirred myself, and pushed on up to the mountain-top, over rock and turf

and splintered shale. There in the golden light spread the dim ranges, shoulder after shoulder, crag by crag, soft and blue in the distance, solid and strong as they drew near. The valleys seemed to brim with golden vapours, the lakes were like silver shields, burnished with innumerable dints, fallen among the hills. There came a passionate longing to draw it all into the heart, to understand what it all meant, light and shadow, hill and vale, waiting so patiently and so peacefully—but for what? The sun was gone now, trailing the orange skirts of twilight after him across the misty sea; a delicate coolness swept over wood and field, wearied by the hot day, a little space of joyful refreshment between the eager flow and the silent darkness, when all things seemed to breathe more freely in a happy weariness, and to live in memories and dreams.

Last of all I went, alert and fresh, down the crumbling track, by the cool falling streams, and the gathering dusk, till the familiar glade received me.

XXVI

WILLIAM MORRIS, in the middle of his fiercest and dreariest time of democratic agitation, wrote to a friend of some literary work that he had to put aside, and said how jolly it would be to be going on with it in a cottage deep in the country, in the autumn weather, which he loved even more than he loved the spring. I suppose that all busy people have felt something like that. I remember that when I was a schoolmaster in full work, correcting exercises as fast as I could, just trying to get work done in time, there used to flash across my mind, with an almost sickening sense of yearning, a picture of some place which I had known and loved, oftenest, I think, one of those old houses such as I knew in Cornwall, half-

manor, half-farm, with barns and stacks about it, perched on a hillside, where the upland dipped steeply down, with copse and dingle and rough cart-tracks, to a valley where the time came softly twice a day. Just to stand there for an instant would be enough, to smell the sea-scent, as the brine stirred the tangled bladder-weed, to hear the rustle of the dry-leaved oak-copse, and the liquid whistle of the curlew overhead! I was reading the other day the life of that ingenious writer James Payn, such a lover of town-life and the club whist-table in his later years, and saw that he lived as a young man after his marriage, in a cottage under the leaf-hung crags of Rydal. Rydal! with its towering scar, and its fern-clad slopes, and the dark water of the lake, with its island thickets, its fringing curve of reeds! It seems better to live and breathe there, to pass from one's books into

the mountain solitudes where the streams fall in rocky pools from the green head of Fairfield, than to stroll down Pall Mall, with the heavy roar of London in the air, into the muffled murmurs of the crowded club.

How often have I thought, since my life took its new turn, when I have been wandering in some remote part of England, and have seen some solitary grange on the edge of the moorland, or a quiet house in a stone-walled Cotswold hamlet among its orchards, that life could there be a perfectly easy, beautiful, simple thing. The strange thing is that though I have tried it, proved its fallacy, seen its emptiness, the delusion haunts me with an almost irresistible impulse. But it is refreshment which one needs; a contrast, not a change of life. It is sweet and wholesome enough to make retreat into these beloved places, to walk far

among woods and moors, to forget the din and dust of life, to shake oneself free of trivial entanglements, to watch the delicate forms of plant and tree, the long lines of pasture-land and fallow, to pass through the old clustered hamlet, long moulded by the use and care of man. Only thus, I think, does one redress the balance, set the proportion right, invigorate the fretted brain. But one cannot live among these peaceful scenes, unless one also really lives *in* them. One may wish that fate had made one a woodman or a shepherd; and doubtless it is the fact that the blood of so many hundreds of old peasants and labourers flows in our veins that makes us regard such scenes with so fond and urgent a love. But life and circumstance have made me different, and to leave faculties unused and pent-up is a sure source of morbid miseries. It is only a very few of the strongest and

simplest spirits, like Wordsworth, who can dare to seclude themselves in peace; and even Wordsworth paid a heavy price, in self-absorption and solemnity, for his experiment.

But that one still desires it, though one cannot do it, seems to me a proof or a presumption that the spirit comes from some land of secret peace and returns to it, its probation over; and that the stir and interchange of life is but an interlude in some more tranquil existence; that one comes to life, as one goes to school, to learn definite things, to get experience. Life would be too cruel, too pointless a thing, in its constant disappointment, its hurry, its pressure, its blank failures, if it were not so. It seems to me a chance that is given us to act finely, to gather in love, to prove that we can aim at something which lies behind all difficulties and uncongenialities.

And thus though I am sure that for all of us a life of action and intercourse and labour is the true one, that we cannot hope to linger day by day among the woods or fields we love, to see the daylight melt into dark, and the star rise tangled in the dewy grove, yet that the desire to do this, the deep thirst of the spirit for such fine rapturous moments, is a very real symbol of some deep and wonderful adventure. I was told once of a very hard-worked and faithful parish priest, who in a holiday went with a friend to a quiet and beautiful part of England. They were standing together one evening by a bridge over a little stream that ran beside their inn, while the shiver of the dusk passed fragrantly down the valley, and the friend said something about the beauty of it all. The weary priest said, "Yes, it is beautiful, but to me it is only beautiful in a horrible way! I have lived

so long in dirty and ugly places, so full of human beings at their worst and meanest, that I have lost all the power of feeling the charm of silence and night and the sound of waters. It means nothing to me now; it only comes to me with a mocking echo of something that I have lost." That, I think, was a very sad word, with a sadness about it for which no passion of work, no energy of toil, can wholly atone; it was not only that he had lost the taste for what was beautiful, but he had lost with it the power of peace and delight, which leavens and transmutes all that we do. One cannot work from a sort of bitter and dreary habit; for then all that one does and says, for the sake of others and to others, is clouded and obscured, unless one carries in oneself a spring of beauty and joy. The yearning for such things, even if it comes as a tired contrast to what one is doing,

is at least a sign that one's heart is alive. And so what one must aim at is a just and due proportion; one must make life and relations and sympathies the main current of our days; but we must also as carefully try to keep our hearts alive to things that are beautiful and quiet, just as the stream which foams and bubbles over the weir, turns the mill, bears the boat, cleanses the drain, also has its time of peace, when it creeps up the still backwater among flowering plants and wild-rose thickets, laps among the reeds, lets fall its soiled burden, and returns again pure and tranquil to gladden the earth and serve it.

XXVII

THE vital, the profound mistake of my little experiment was that I tried to arrange life on romantic lines. I do not know how one can learn that this is not possible except by doing it and finding it a failure. Many people have not the chance of doing it at all, and that is perhaps a happier solution; but I found myself at the age of two-and-forty a free man after a very busy professional life of twenty years, with enough to live upon, no claims, no family ties. It was then that an ideal took shape, to live the poetic life. I thought I could make my writing the solid business of my life, and that otherwise I could live simply and quietly, avoiding tiresome routine and business duties, seeing just the people I

liked, and practising to enjoy solitude, which must, as life goes on, envelop and involve the unmarried man, whether he will or no.

But one must take life as it comes; one must live it, one cannot enact it. Self-dramatisation is a difficult thing and needs great courage, great inventiveness, a prolongation of childlike zest, a magnificent imperturbability. I do indeed know a few people whose life is still a childish game, intently played; but at its best it is only a species of entrenchment, where every device is employed to avoid the onset of life; and even so there is generally a traitor in the citadel. Affection is a traitor; one finds oneself drawn to love some one of the invading host, and then all one's defences become but cumbrous obstacles to one's chance of welcoming the beloved one inside the lines. One makes, it may be, a clumsy

effort to capture and kidnap; and if one cannot, the old suffering begins again, which seals the garden-spices up and clouds the steady sun. Or else some feeble quality turns traitor; it is not enough to feel serene; one's serenity must be observed and envied; or feebler still, the little grievance, the tiny disappointment, becomes an intolerable thing, and assumes a morbid proportion inside the paradise, like the princess who slept so uneasily upon the twenty feather-beds, because of the dried pea on the nether mattress!

But life itself—life dreadful, severe, monotonous, as well as life exciting, adorable, delicious, is what we need. It is the experience which we fear and yet have to conquer which helps us, not the experience which we clasp to our heart. We have to do the duties which bore us, to adjust ourselves to peevish and froward people, that

we may realise that we are capable of boredom, and that we may learn that we are ourselves prejudiced and unreasonable. The strife, the censure, the annoyance which takes the heart out of one, the necessity of yielding and compromising, the fear of pain and sorrow, the failure, the blunder, the loss—these are the things which purify and strengthen, and not the pleasant loitering in the meadow beside the stream. It is the power of recollecting, combining, imagining, the power of knowing exactly what we dislike, and of reconstructing the design of life without it, which brings us suffering. But the wonder and the largeness of life all consist in the fact that it is so different from anything which we could have designed and executed. So much more unexpected, so much more imaginative, so much stronger, bigger, freer, more vehement —more real, in fact. We think of our-

selves when we are young and hopeful, as we think perhaps of Odysseus, moving on through life patient, inventive, gleeful; we subtract the horror and the danger, the nakedness and the hunger, because we anticipate throughout the triumph and the victorious home-coming; ultimate triumph and the consciousness of it—that is what we demand.

And instead, what do we find?—a complex labyrinthine place, full of blind alleys and high-walled glooms; tracts of it pleasant enough, no doubt, where the road is level and grassy, and the trees dangle their fruit over the wall; but then we come to be aware of death girdling the horizon whichever way we look, like an encircling sea; and there are ugly things lying in wait, giants and pitfalls, and padding fiends with hollow voices, "great stenches," as in the *Pilgrim's Progress,* that lie across the road.

The error is, not if we feel heroic—it is all the better if we can do that—but if we feel romantic, anticipate ultimate triumph, believe that we shall find life at last golden and serene, all its victories won. Instead of that we must face disaster and failure, and last of all we know not what, by which we shall be shattered once and for all; we need not dwell in these thoughts, nor bemoan our hard fate; all that is a weakening and a wasteful thing; and the more we practise to be serene and undismayed, the less will all calamity hurt us. But we need not believe calamity and stress and pain to be wholly horrible things; we must observe them fearlessly, feel them deeply, bear them patiently, and then they will yield their sweetness and their strength.

And thus we may grow to perceive that life as it is, and not life on our own terms and conditions, is a marvellous thing, and

that its power to mould and enlarge us lies in its unexpectedness, its terror, its mystery, its sudden splendours, its lofty music. Experience is the one thing we all of us want; it is for that that we are here; and we must not sort and select it. We must live, in fact, by instinct rather than by reason. The real life of man lies in his instinct, in the blind force that thrusts him into life and bids him go forward. Reason is but the power of perceiving and analysing and arranging experience; but it has no force in itself; it is the eye and not the heart of the spirit.

And so I saw that I must not only scheme to watch and enjoy and distinguish, and assess flavours and hues and sounds, but that I must love and suffer and work, and be weary and sorrowful and bewildered; and the great disaster that crept upon me so secretly and silently was the

very guidance of God, showing me that I must not choose, nor reject, nor sit remote, but descend into the turbid stream, rushing in desolate places, and dip myself there seven times if I desired to be healed.

Oh, the blessed voice that called to me so gravely as I sate in my sheltered garden looking out over the green miles! It was grievous enough, when I found myself in heaviness and disgust, staring out upon a world that had lost all beauty and sweetness for me. But now that the light has returned, it is an added sweetness to walk in the silent woodland paths, where I meditated flight and even death. There is a place, how strangely stamped upon my mind, where the pasture rises steep from a little hazel-hidden stream, where I turned aside into the wood, in one of my days of anguish, sate down upon a fallen tree, looked hither and thither and determined

that I must die—that there was no way out. What would I not have given then to have just sunk down in peace among the spring flowers, and to have felt the tide of oblivion roll in upon my soul! But even in that moment a voice from somewhere deeper than any reason could penetrate said: "No, you cannot; you have yet far to go; you must struggle on, bear, endure." And as it is, to pass that place is now a sacred and a joyful thing, because it brings back to me my sad hour and the voice that spoke with me, and the knowledge that there might yet be good days in store.

But the best thing that such an hour does for the spirit is to reveal the depth of its bitterness; deeper than self-pity, beyond all pretences, all excuses, further than any consolation or love can reach. One can never be quite the same again, after that

baptism of suffering, because one has seen the naked truth; but one knows, too, that it is possible to endure even that, and to emerge unscathed and full of joy.

XXVIII

It is long since I have written in this book; the months speed past, and to-day is a perfectly beautiful day of autumn. The sunshine is clear and still, brimming the fields and hollows of the distant hills with a golden haze and shadows of sapphire blue. Coming home, I look out from the windows of my little book-lined room, over a great box-hedge, into the quiet College garden—such a strangely secluded place, with its grassy terraces, its tree-girt paddock, to find in the heart of a busy town! The hum of the streets comes to me as a mellow murmur. The high elms are just beginning to flame into gold, the Virginia creeper on the chapel wall intertwines its scarlet tresses with the sombre green of the

ivy. The sunset begins to fade over the old walls and screening thickets into a peaceful tinge of green just touched with streaks of rusty orange.

But this quiet is no more for me a thing in itself, a thing to feed upon and surrender the mind to. I do not count the time ill-spent when I could do that. But it is now just a sweet background to a busy and active life, full of duties and business, of no great sweep or range perhaps, but worth doing and loving. I have not wholly escaped, I feel, from the shadow of the dark hours; every now and then a causeless sadness creeps upon me, stealing the joy out of life for half a day. But that again I do not regret, for it reminds me almost thankfully of the long months of distress and gloom, and all I have endured.

To-day I went with a friend far into the country; he told me in frank speech how

he had been spending sad weeks in his old home, seeing the gradual withdrawal from life of one whom he loved very dearly. He had had to bear the sorrow of sitting hopelessly beside her, while she lay stricken into silence, aware only too well of what was happening, the tears gathering in her eyes and falling. There was no hope, he said, of any sort of recovery, and all that science and skill could do was just to prolong the fading worn-out life, which only longed to rest and cease. The saddest thing of all, he said, was that one could not even communicate one's thought or one's love. There was nothing to be said, for all that could agitate was forbidden; nothing to be done but to watch the soul, sorely hampered by the fading body, make its slow way into darkness. What could be the meaning, he said, of a descent into death so reluctant, so full of anguish, so bewildered, either for the

poor spirit itself or for those that stood round? The very bearing of pain, the fruitless endurance, seemed to steal from him the best energies of life, hopefulness and usefulness alike burning away in a sort of slovenly and ill-savoured flame. What worthy plan, he said, could be involved in any decay that seemed so disgraceful to the laws of strength and light?

Yet I felt and tried to say that the very mystery of it all was almost a proof of its fruitfulness. A spirit might be resting thus, purging itself, in some process far deeper than any intellectual perception, from stubbornness and harshness of spirit. Because it is clear to me that there is something in each of us which does need to be broken. We cannot break it for ourselves, however much we may grieve to feel the presence of the indomitable quality, whatever it may be—self-confidence, harsh judg-

ment, rectitude, dogmatism. The only way by which this self-surrender can be forced upon the spirit is by its being confronted with some impenetrable sorrow or blank fear. When we have faced that, have seen no ray of light or hope, and yet find that the soul lives on, irrepressible, imperishable, vital, we may then be sure that our deliverance draws near. Yet nothing but unutterable fear can do for us what we need, the fear which reduces us to our last elements; when we can only remember, as in a troubled dream, that we have loved others or that others have loved us, so incredibly remote, so helplessly sad do the memories of old bright days, happy groups, thoughtless joys appear—all irrecoverably lost, fruitlessly squandered, heedlessly enjoyed!

It is said by those who minister at death-beds that no one is ever afraid to die; it is not only that the body, racked by rest-

less pain, desires to sink into unconsciousness, but there comes, I believe, into the mind the knowledge that after all it is natural and simple to do what all have done, to take the next step, to pass into new experience. Once, in a moment of perfect health, in the Alps, I came very near to death indeed in a crevasse. I was rescued only just in time, after swimming faintly away in my expiring breath. I certainly had no sense of fear; and stranger still, on recovering, my first thought was not of relief, but of unwillingness to be recalled to life. It seemed all over and done with, and I seemed caught back from something even more real than life.

Now, indeed, in recovered health I have an intense desire to live and to use life. All that I do seems charged with significance and savour. I find myself, indeed, when I fall asleep at night, feeling the un-

conscious hours that are to follow as a waste of rich material. But behind and beyond all that, there is a sense of a life more permanent and real than any press of worldly business, any intellectual delight, any pleasant scheme or hope. A deeper current seems to flow beneath it all, a current of *being,* of which the outward sign is not the tangible part of life, but the relations with, the recognition of, other spirits like my own, which seem to me now not so much as brothers and sisters, distinct, though with common interests, as part of the very stuff of my own being. That is now one of the deepest joys of life, to push past all the material defences, the habits, gestures, prejudices, tastes, judgments—all the things that isolate us from each other —and to feel the contact of a trustful and harmonious spirit within. Friendship—love —these are imperfect words for that recog-

nition; they are little more than the acts and signals that surround the inner unity. What it all means I hardly know, because there still seem abundance of spirits to whom one cannot thus draw near. But it seems almost the deepest gift of all which has been given me, to be able to look naturally and without any chilly defiances for the answering spirit behind the material veil. Not only does my shadowed period seem to have increased and multiplied friendships, but to have deepened those already existing in a way which I cannot describe—to have brought a new power with it of dispensing with the slow ceremonies of proffered concord.

Of course the old thwarting difficulties recur; but they come in a different shape, not as eternal distinctions, hostilities of aim and view which cannot be dispelled and must be accepted, but as temporary

divisions, which may be broken down both in oneself and others. The things which divide us seem to be but the shadow cast by the body upon the spirit. In this world of matter we have to provide ourselves with food and shelter, we have to secure our place in the world, to live our lives; and as if that were not enough, we like to surround ourselves with things which we cannot use, but which we may gloat over, like the rich fool in the Gospel, as accumulations to safeguard us in ease and indolence.

I cannot honestly say that this has wholly left me; even if one does not care for mere possessions, still one craves for privacy and security, and these are expensive things. But one may see through them, I think, and realise that there is a union possible behind it all.

I do earnestly desire not to hoard my hope and my knowledge. "Learn to know

all, and to keep thyself unknown," says the old grim cautious motto. The more I know, I now think, the less do I desire to keep myself unknown. There is nothing I would not tell, if it only assuredly broke down some barrier between myself and another's soul.

It is this which I believe one has to do —to cast oneself freely and lavishly on the world; not, of course, in a voluble egotism, just telling one's tale, like a child, with no thought of anything but the pleasure of describing. I do not mean that at all. I mean rather the communicativeness which by its confidence attracts another's confidence, and wins a secure trust—to arrive at an understanding, to realise that we are all bent on the same peace and affection, not to let any preference or prejudice stand in the way of harmony. Not to be afraid of giving ourselves away, and to dread only separation and loneliness.

That seems to me, perhaps, the central thought of the Gospel message—to become as little children, guileless, open to any proffer of friendship, caring for nothing but a sharing of joy. The image does not mean that the child is necessarily faultless, but its faults are not cold or calculating faults, but the faults of weakness or ignorance. It is the poor pretence of not being ignorant and weak that maims so many spirits. The joy is not to know what we need, not to be self-confident, vain of our effectiveness, greedy of influence.

To see the best, to desire it, that is the secret. It is that which works slowly outwards from within, transforming and making beautiful, just as age, when self departs, makes calm and firm the harsher lineaments of the years of stress and strife.

To resolve, if we may, that nothing on our side shall keep others from us—that is

all that we can do, to forget slights and humiliations, to labour above all for peace, remembering that even now there is no war so vile but that it professes to aim at justice and tranquillity. To discern in everything the deeper currents of the soul; not to be misled into thinking that any clear-sightedness of view, any artistic expression of thought, can atone for any chilling of the life-blood of emotion, any checking of the vital beating of the heart. To live in the day and for the day, neither in dreamy memory nor radiant prospect, but just dealing with life as simply, as humbly, as tenderly as one can.

And last of all this; we must be content to remain in very great and sorrowful ignorance of many of the mysteries of life. It will not do to make our theories complete, and to have brisk and complacent certainties. A theory is too often only a

shield with which a man wards off experience, and guards himself from the loving wounds of God. We fortify ourselves in countless ways against the Unknown, by work, by wealth, by comfort, by talk, by laughter, by philosophy, alas, even by religion. What we can all of us experience, if we will, is the reaching out of the soul to light, and truth, and love; but it is easy to quench that flame, by caution and unkindness and suspicion, and the anxious care for tangible things. We must free ourselves from anything which weighs down the spirit; if we resist a generous impulse, if we learn to criticise and belittle rather than to admire and praise; if we impute mean motives, if we suspect the goodwill of others, if we sacrifice persons to causes, if we labour for esteem, we are darkening the light; we must not be ashamed of weakness, for if the danger of

the strong is the temptation to bend others to their will, it is the privilege of the weak to see more clearly, even if they cannot effect what they desire; and so the only way is to open our whole soul to experience and light and God, rejoicing in weakness, and ignorance, and humiliation, because these are the openings through which the truth passes in to the soul; our own souls, the souls of others, God—these are the eternal things, and not the fading glories, the gross satisfaction of the visible world.

And so, before we part, I will only ask any unseen friend into whose hands this book may fall, to say with me the old psalm, which in its tender waiting upon God, its gentle bearing of experience, its holding out of loving hands to all desirous souls, its infinite hope, sums up and consecrates all that I have tried to say or wished to express:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

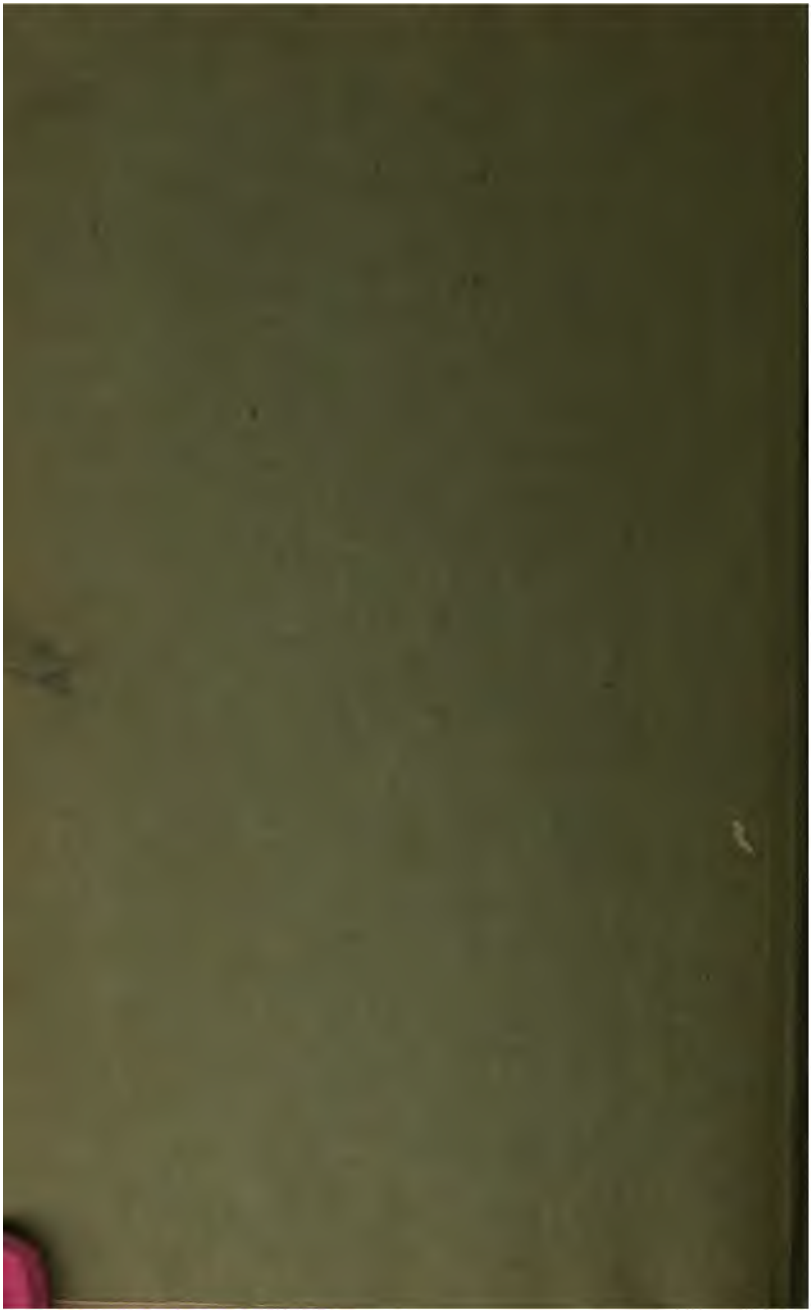
THE END

A Selection from the
Catalogue of

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

Complete Catalogue sent
on application

(R.



SEP 30 1929